

BECKY LANDERS

Frontier Warrior



By Constance Lindsay Skinner

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The book every girl wants

BECKY LANDERS

Frontier Warrior

By

Constance Lindsay Skinner

Author of

"Silent Scot," "The White Leader," etc.

This is your book, girls who love the outdoors. On your hikes you learn forest lore for pleasure: how to start a fire and how to stop one; the difference between one bird's call and another's; how to imitate wilderness sounds; how to tell, by acute listening, whether wind, deer, rabbit, or human feet make the near-by rustling, how to move silently and to shoot straight. On the Kentucky frontier Becky Landers learned these things as her only protection from the terrible Indian peril. Hers is a great tale of early American history.

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BECKY LANDERS, FRONTIER WARRIOR
SILENT SCOT, FRONTIER SCOUT
THE WHITE LEADER

BECKY LANDERS

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BY

CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER

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BECKY LANDERS

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CHAPTER I

BECKY'S CHRISTMAS TURKEY

BECKY LANDERS, being the man of the family, knew that if there was to be turkey on the Christmas dinner table, she would have to provide it. And the younger members of the household had decreed turkey. With Ted, aged seven, and Ruth, aged five and a half, the point was already settled. Their mother only said,

"It would be nice to give them what they want at Christmas time. There's so little we can give the children in Kentucky—except peril." Her blue eyes, misted by sorrow, seemed to look at something a long way off.

Becky's throat contracted sharply. She could not accustom herself to the change that had come over her once playful, merry mother since that terrible day when raiding Indians from Kaskaskia had captured Rodney. Mrs. Landers was a devoted and a companionable mother to all her children, but her eldest, Rodney, had been a little closer to her than the others, perhaps because her husband's

death had made her so much more dependent upon her son. On the frontier a boy of sixteen was a man, a hunter, a soldier, a provider and a strong arm of protection for the women and children not of his household alone but of his settlement. And in these first years of the Revolution when, on the Atlantic seaboard, two opposing ideals of government grappled like giants towering and swaying against the flushing dawn sky of freedom, a blood-red shadow was cast over Kentucky. That fierce warrior and prophet, Dragging Canoe, had warned the first white men who had purchased land in the red man's "Beloved Old Fields"—which is the meaning of the name Kentucky—that they would find it "a dark and bloody ground." Ever since the planting of the first settlement the Indians from all sides had been doing their best to fulfil Dragging Canoe's prophecy. Whole settlements had been wiped out, men, women, and children slain or carried away to whatever fate the whim of their captors might dictate—some to be murdered on the march in a moment of angry caprice, others to be burned in the Indian towns in celebration of the victory, and a few to be saved and adopted into the tribe.

"Mother," Becky said, gently, "we all know how the Indians love strength and courage and a handsome look. Those who came here as friends always admired Rod so much because he was so tall and straight and could run and jump and shoot and wrestle as well as any of their own boys. They

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didn't kill Rod, Mother. I *know* they didn't. I just *know* it."

She kissed her mother, then went swiftly across the kitchen, took down her rifle, slung her powder horn round her neck and her shot pouch at her waist, and, after adjusting her beaver cap somewhat rakishly over her mass of brown curls, she turned in the doorway and said, laughing,

"Now for the Christmas turkey!"

"Becky," her mother called after her anxiously, "don't go out of sight of the fort."

Becky waved her hand and tramped swiftly on. Mother always said that, poor, grieved, terrified Mother. But, as Becky knew, deer and turkey and buffalo did not come nosing up against the walls of the fort offering to replenish the harassed white men's larder. As her friend, the old scout Simon Kenton, often said, "Food's for life; an' if yer want food in Kaintuck today yer've got ter risk life ter git it."

It did not seem at all strange to Becky Landers that she should be setting off on this crisp white sunny twenty-fourth of December with a man's rifle over her shoulder on the dangerous quest for turkey, instead of hanging be-ribboned packages on a tree or stitching lace flounces on a party dress as most other girls of fifteen might be doing at that time. Becky had never had a "party dress"; possibly she had never even seen a lace flounce; and the preparation of any jolly entertainment in the protection

and security of a civilized home was an experience she had never known. Becky's dress in winter was a long fringed deerskin jerkin over deerskin or fur short trousers and leggings. Her boots were moc-casins. In the summer she wore a one-piece linsey-woolsey frock of her own or her mother's weaving. She danced almost as much perhaps as any belle in the proud social heights of Charleston or Philadelphia; but in every gay turn of the old English country dance she knew precisely where her rifle hung on the log wall. She could reach it in a few lithe wildcat leaps if the door flung open to let some breathless messenger shout, "Injuns! Get into the fort!" Or if, across the fiddler's merry tune, cut the low, chilling "Heh-yeh-i" of the war-whoop.

In a city or a safe country village, Becky Landers would have been called a tomboy, because she had always been fonder of boys' sports than of girlish amusements. On the frontier, her swift running and jumping, her good marksmanship, and her native intelligence on the trail—what we might call her good scout work—and her utter fearlessness had given her enviable fame. From Boonesborough and Harrodsburg to Crab Orchard the settlers knew the name of Becky Landers and respected it. To Becky, herself, she seemed in no way remarkable. She was without vanity and she had a very practical mind. When Indians had killed her father, as the caravan of which the Land-

ers family was a part came through Cumberland Gap into Kentucky, her brother Rodney, two years older than herself, had become the head of the family, its provider and protector. When, later, other savages had captured Rodney and taken him away, it had devolved on Becky to become the man of the family. She was that man to the best of her ability.

So far from admiring herself, Becky was reckoning her limitations as she set out after her Christmas turkey. She could hunt, yes; but she could not fight. When the frontiersmen took the warpath themselves to assist some other settlement in driving off the Indian bands, which the British Governor Hamilton of Detroit sent down on Kentucky from time to time, she was never mustered among the warriors. They called her a "girl" then. The warpath, as Simon Kenton said, was "no place fer gals." How could she ever hope to find Rod if they would not let her go with George Rogers Clark and his men when they made their raid on Kaskaskia? Becky had heard of the plans of that notable young Kentucky soldier. Clark said that the settlements in Kentucky could not stand if they remained solely on the defensive. He was for the bold stroke!

"If Virginia will only send me the powder and lead I've asked for," he had told Simon Kenton, "I'll take two hundred and fifty men and rush down on Kaskaskia and Vincennes and capture them be-

fore the enemy know we're there! They are the keys to the Illinois country. With them I'll go on and lock out the British at Detroit. Some say it's not Governor Hamilton but that queer sallow-faced devil, Major Hay, who is responsible for this Indian business. But, whoever it is, he'd send no more savages down on Kentucky! If Virginia'll only send me the powder!"

Even several of the bravest men in Kentucky thought Clark's scheme a folly and Clark himself a madman. Becky didn't. They agreed with the famous scout, Kenton, who said,

"He's brave, but he's too young ter have much sense abaout a big thing like that."

Becky disagreed with them. To her, aged fifteen, Clark, who was twenty-three, was not "young." She wished that she knew him, and that he lived in Maybrook, her own settlement, instead of Louisville which was so far away.

"I believe I could make him let me go on the dash to Kaskaskia," she mused. "He'd understand."

Her mind ran on, recalling all the various things she had heard men say of Clark. For instance, they said how different he was from Daniel Boone, the other outstanding figure in Kentucky. Boone was much older, of course; and he was mild and affable, a man to be loved and trusted at sight—a wise man, too, intelligent, experienced. But Clark! Clark was the wildest "white Indian" the frontier had ever seen. He was fierce, violent, rash beyond

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all sanity, a man to be feared. Yet, they were forced to admit it, Clark was loved, too, and trusted. He was honest. His word was good. And he had an uncanny power over other men. The worst ruffians and bandits in Kentucky fell into line at his nod. They adored him. Then, too, the women had only good words for him. He was so handsome, with his well set-up body, his brownish blonde hair, his finely cut mouth and powerfully shaped head, and his eyes that flashed a whitish gray in anger, or, in his pleasant moods, were as vividly and tenderly blue as the spring sky. He was kind and chivalrous always to women of all ages; and every woman in Kentucky sang his praises.

"I just *know* Clark would take me to Kaskaskia to look for Rod," said Becky to herself again.

Through the leafless boughs of the winter-stripped trees she could see the river. A stretch of unbroken level lay between the forest fringe where she stood and the bank of the broad stream. It had been a mild winter thus far. The ground was not even lightly thatched with snow, and the river was open. The sun dropped a mellow warm light from a cloudless sky. The air was still autumnal. Becky had walked rapidly for two hours and had long ago left the fort far behind. She knew that there was comparatively little danger of a raid in December. Summer was the Indian's war season. And sometimes, in the brief warm spell towards the end of

autumn, the red men came down again for one last attack before winter had sealed up the land. That is why the frontiersmen called that brief warm spell "Indian summer."

While it was not likely that a war party was lurking about, Becky had kept a careful look-out for Indian signs. So far, she had not seen the trace of a human footfall on the grass and dry leaves. Nor had she seen a turkey. Now, suddenly both human beings and turkeys appeared at once! She espied a large boat on the river, swinging down mid-stream. It was apparently heading for the shore directly in front of her; and it was a white man's boat. She was about to run across the fifty yards or so of open space to the landing-place when she caught sight of turkey feathers. There was her Christmas dinner, pecking through the weeds among the thick bushes on the bank's rim! She counted them by tails—one turkey, two, three, another, more still, a flock of a dozen, perhaps eighteen! And in a few minutes the boatmen would ground on the shore, startle the whole flock and send them swiftly winging over the river, probably, and high into blue heavens of unattainable desire! It was a terrible situation for the young hunter. The low bushes were so thick that she could not see the birds themselves, only those tantalizing tails. Her only chance of bagging a turkey was to fire at once at the spot where, judging from its tail feathers, the nearest turkey should be.

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Becky dropped down behind a log, propped her heavy long-barreled rifle on it, steadying it with the thick moss pad she carried for that purpose, took careful aim and fired. The result of her shot was such that her heart almost leaped out of her mouth. With a wild yell a dozen redskins jumped up from among the bushes, their turkey feather headdresses tossing in the air. Almost instantly one Indian fell, his heart pierced by a shot from the boat. More shots cracked from the boat and took deadly effect. Becky's mind worked as fast as her fingers, which were rapidly reloading her rifle. She grasped the full seriousness of her predicament. She had stumbled upon an ambush. Whoever the white men in the big boat were, the Indians had received word of their coming and had been lying in wait to kill them. But for the fact that Becky Landers was looking for a Christmas turkey, and had fired at a bunch of tail feathers, the white men would have been shot down as they landed. She could guess what was taking place in the minds of the savages. They believed that they in their turn had been ambushed. The shot from behind meant to them not that Becky Landers was trying for a turkey but that armed white men were screened in the woods. Becky knew that her only hope of escape was to intensify that impression. She must keep on firing as fast as she could reload, to discourage the Indians from rushing into her bit of forest. She knew that when Indians discovered they were in a trap,

they seldom stayed to fight; they usually broke through and made off.

Bang! her second shot rhymed with a volley from the boat. The savages caught up their wounded and dashed westward along the bank. Far down the river a large canoe slid out from the opposite shore to meet them. Becky lay still, peering over the log's edge, and watched their flight.

"Hullo-oo, there!" A white man, followed by several others, came up over the edge of the bank. He called again, "Hullo, there! Come on out, you fellows, and let's shake hands with you."

"Hullo!" Becky's clear light tones floated back to him and gave him such a shock that he almost dropped his rifle; and the sight of Becky running towards him fleetly from the woods did nothing to reassure him.

"A girl!" he shouted. "A girl, by thunder!"

"Three cheers for the girl!" another man cried. The men, including their leader, gave the cheers lustily. They laughed in mischievous delight as they saw her cheeks grow crimson.

"Why, it's Becky Landers!"

Becky looked quickly at the speaker. Gradually, through the haze of her embarrassment, she recognized him, and then the man next to him. They were Bill Canty and Jeff Smoke, two ruffians who had been driven out of Maybrook more than a year before. A sense of real fear, which the Indians had not inspired, came over her. Who were these

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nine men? And why had they come? She looked again, anxiously, at their leader and took some comfort from his handsome manly face and the blue eyes which beamed on her with frank admiration and kindness. Still, she had to know; and, according to her habit, she went straight to the point.

"Are you a highwayman too?" she asked, looking him bravely in the eyes.

"Sort of," he answered, his white teeth showing in a flashing smile.

"Because if you are," she went on steadily, though she felt her knees beginning to shake, "I haven't anything but my rifle. And we need that so terribly. You see, I have to take care of Mother and the children."

"That's right," Jeff Smoke put in. "She's the man o' the family. Her Paw's killed an' Injuns run off with her brother."

The leader put out his hand and grasped hers.

"Becky Landers," he said, "you're a first-class fighting man and we're proud to know you. Maybe you've heard of me. My name's Clark."

"Not George Rogers Clark!" she gasped, her bright brown eyes getting rounder and larger.

"That's me, Becky," he laughed.

"But you said you were a highwayman!"

"Well, that's the mildest name they're calling me back in Virginia right now," he answered. "You see, I've got a boatload of powder down below.

The Virginia Assembly wouldn't vote it to me because they said they couldn't afford it. So I told them, if they didn't, I'd raise three or four hundred men out here and take Kentucky for myself——"

"We could do it, too, b'gosh!" Bill Canty exclaimed.

"'For,' said I, 'gentlemen, if you think Kentucky is not worth defending you can't think it worth holding, so it'll be no loss to you.' They were afraid I meant it! So they gave me the powder. But the Governor said I was no better than 'a highwayman.' Now you see why I answered 'sort of' when you asked me."

"I see," Becky answered, dimpling.

"And, Becky Landers, if the Indians had killed me and my friends here, and had captured the powder, it's likely the British would have taken Kentucky. That powder's going along in our powder horns, Becky, to Kaskaskia and Vincennes. When you shot at those savages, Becky Landers, maybe you fired the shot that'll save Kentucky."

"I didn't fire at savages," Becky said. She was far too truthful to accept praise she felt was not deserved. "I only saw their tails—I mean—I thought they were turkeys. And I had promised the babies a Christmas turkey."

She colored hotly again as a roar of mirth went round.

"Jeff," said Clark, as soon as he could speak,

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"run down to the boat and fetch the two turkeys I shot this morning."

"Right enough," Jeff agreed, and jumped over the bank. When he returned, Clark took the turkeys, and slung them over his shoulder.

"You boys can eat deer," he said. "And you'd better fall to as soon as you've pitched camp. I'll sleep at Kenton's tonight. But first I'm going home with Becky Landers and her Christmas turkeys. I want to tell Mrs. Landers what a great soldier her daughter is. You needn't blush, Becky Landers. Even if you did shoot just because you thought they were turkeys, you kept on after you knew they were Indians. It took brains to know that was the best thing to do, and it took courage to do it. When we eat dinner in Kaskaskia, boys, we'll drink the first toast to Becky Landers, the lass that saved our powder."

"You bet we will!" they shouted.

Becky's heart was thumping as she turned back through the woods, where the blue shadows of dusk were beginning to fall, with George Rogers Clark at her side. The trail they traveled was the one she had made earlier in the day on her hunt for the Christmas turkey and now it led them back to the Landers' cabin inside the walls of the Maybrook fort. But, to Becky Landers, every softly crunching print of her small moccasined foot beside his on that dry leafy trail homeward seemed to mark another step forward on the road to Kaskaskia and Rodney.

CHAPTER II

A CAPTAIN OF OUTLAWS

THEY encountered Kenton at the gate. Of course Kenton seized upon Clark for an hour of news and gossip; so Becky ran on home alone, with her turkeys.

"Turkey! turkey!" shrieked Ted and Ruth as she burst into the cabin. They pranced about her in wild delight. Ted yanked a feather out of one turkey's tail and stuck it in his hair and began to warwhoop. Almost instantly there was a yell of grief from Ruthie who had tried to do the same thing and failed. Her baby fingers were not strong enough to make even a dead turkey yield up its tail feathers. Ted, like a good brother, gave her his quill and pulled out another for himself.

"Here, Baby," he said comfortingly, "don't cry. Nothing to cry about now we've got turkey for Christmas dinner. I was scared Becky'd come home without any."

"Becky wouldn't," Ruthie piped up happily. Her tears were drying on her rosy cheeks. Her eyes, bright blue like her mother's and Ted's, shone radiantly.

"Yes," Mrs. Landers said, smiling proudly at

her eldest daughter. "We knew you would shoot turkeys for us."

"But I didn't," Becky answered, laughing. "I only shot some Indians."

"Indians!" Ted cried, while little Ruth's eyes rounded out like Delft saucers.

"Oh, Becky!" Mrs. Landers pleaded. "Don't joke about Indians."

"I'm *not* joking. I really did shoot some Indians. You see they had turkey feather head-dresses and I *thought* they were turkeys——"

"Say! Are you telling one of them made-up Christmas stories?" Ted demanded.

"Teddie! Not them stories. *Those* stories," his mother corrected.

"Simon Kenton says *them*," the boy defended himself. "Doesn't he, Becky?"

"Simon is a great man," Becky chuckled happily.

"Precisely, my dear boy. Simon Kenton *is* a great man. And that is why he may say many things which are not proper for little boys," Mrs. Landers said tactfully.

"Well! *Is* it a made-up story?" Ted, worsted in the argument but not admitting it, returned to his first point. "I don't like made-up stories."

"No! It is *not* a made-up story. Keep perfectly quiet, everybody, and I'll tell you about it." Becky perched on the wooden bench beside her mother and took Ruthie on her knee.

"You see, I reached a coppice by the river before

I saw one single turkey," she began. "I had been thinking that, in spite of all my efforts, you would have to eat jerked deermeat for Christmas——"

"I wouldn't!" Ted averred.

"Yes, you would. You'd eat wolf! Now don't interrupt. Then suddenly I saw a whole flock of turkeys in the brush on the edge of the river. That is, I thought I did. All I could really see was their tail feathers. I supposed they were pecking away at ground berries. Then at the same time I saw a boat coming to shore——"

"Oh, Becky!" Mrs. Landers exclaimed, "were there really Indians in the boat?"

"No, mother darling. White men. But, of course, they were going to scare my turkeys. Well, to make a long story short, I shot."

"At the men?" Ted asked excitedly.

"No, silly boy. At the turkeys. You didn't ask me to bring home a roasted man for Christmas, you know."

"Don't want woasted man," said Ruthie emphatically. "Not nicey."

"No, dear. Most awfully not nicey!" Becky hugged her, laughing. "But you do interrupt so! How can I remember where I was?"

"You were out hunting turkey, my dear," Mrs. Landers said, smiling.

"And you shot," said Ted.

"S'ot," echoed Ruthie.

"Yes. So I did. And what do you think? Now,

don't be frightened, Mother, because it's all over. Only it was awfully exciting when it happened."

"*What* happened?" Ted fairly shouted in his impatience.

"Indians. Those turkeys leaped up into the air and I saw that they were a small band of Indians with turkey feather headdresses."

"Becky!" Mrs. Landers turned pale and caught her daughter's hand.

"It was quite all right, Mother, because, you see, they were lying in wait for the boat to kill the men in it. And they'd have done it, too, if I hadn't come along hunting turkey for Ted and Ruthie." She giggled. "Then, of course, the men in the boat saw them; and they and the Indians began shooting at each other. And I kept on shooting from the wood, so that the Indians thought they were surrounded and ran away. I saw them cross farther up in a big canoe."

"Where did you get the turkeys?" Ted wanted to know.

"Oh," Becky answered lightly, "one of the men in the boat gave them to me. And I asked him to dinner. No, I mean, he asked himself."

"The least we can do is to give him a bite of his own turkeys," Mrs. Landers agreed.

"Hope he isn't hungry," Ted growled.

"Is he woasted?" Ruthie asked. Her big, round blue eyes began to fill, her lip quivered. "Don't yike woasted man!"

"No, darling. He's just a man, like Simon, and Mr. Boone. He's never been cooked in his life. He's just a nice raw man."

"Becky!" Mrs. Landers laughed.

"Nicey waw man," Ruthie echoed contentedly.

"Now, Mother, I've got another shock for you. Who do you suppose two of the men are? I can tell you *I* was scared when I saw them."

"I can't imagine."

"Jeff Smoke and Bill Canty."

"Oh, Becky! How dreadful! They will rob us."

"Why didn't you shoot them?" Ted demanded.

"Ted!" His mother reproved him by her tone of voice.

"No, they won't rob us, Mother. You should have heard Jeff Smoke telling the man who gave me the turkeys all about Becky Landers. You'd have thought he was prouder of me than of anything in Kentucky. It was really funny."

"I'm afraid our guest can't be a very pleasant person, or he would never be in such company. I hope he isn't a robber, too." Mrs. Landers looked troubled.

"Now you *are* going to get a shock!" Becky's eyes were dancing. "Guess, everybody! *Who is the man?*"

"Daniel Boone!" Ted shouted.

"Santy Claus," Ruthie said, in a tone of finality which offered no chance of argument.

"It isn't Mr. Boone," Mrs. Landers said, shaking her head. "He would never come with those terrible men. You'll have to tell us, dear."

"Santy Claus," Ruthie insisted.

Becky was enjoying the dramatic suspense so much that she lost her opportunity. There came a heavy knocking on the door. Ted rushed to open it. And in walked Simon Kenton followed by Clark himself. Mrs. Landers, seeing the stranger, rose to greet him.

"Wal, M'is Landers," Simon said, "if that thar fierce fightin' gal-boy o' yourn hadn't o' killed off a hunderd Injuns today I'd never have had the pleasure o' introducin' yer ter Cap'n Clark. Cap'n, this hyar lady is Becky Landers' Maw. An' thar ain't no finer lady in all Kaintuck."

"Captain Clark?" Mrs. Landers repeated, a trifle bewildered, as she offered her hand.

"Yeh. George Rogers Clark," Simon explained. "Don't wonder he takes yer by surprise, Ma'am. He's made that way. Cap'n Clark jumps onto folks' blind side fust an' takes the wind aout'n them. Then he takes everythin' else they've got araound handy."

"Kenton, you're giving me a mighty bad character." Clark's blue eyes were merry. He took Mrs. Landers' hand in his firm grip. "It is an honor to meet the mother of such a brave and intelligent girl as Becky Landers."

"You make me very proud, Captain Clark."

Mrs. Landers' pale cheeks were flushed with pleasure.

Presently Clark was telling the story of his adventures with the boatload of powder to a rapt audience with, of course, frequent interrupting questions from Ted.

"Madam," he said, "your daughter has told me that your eldest son is a captive among the Indians. That powder she saved today, by firing the shot which gave us warning, will be the means of bringing him home again."

"Oh, I hope so! But often I have *no* hope—feeling that they have killed him."

"Not likely." Clark spoke emphatically. "Not that sort of a boy. They have adopted him. He is just what they want. They know the right sort when they see it! You may have heard that Daniel Boone was captured several times during his first explorations in Kentucky. But the Indians never wanted to kill him. They wanted him to belong to the tribe. He was too smart for them, though. He always got away."

"Were you ever captured?" Becky asked. Her eyes were shining with excitement and delight.

Clark turned to her with a smile.

"Yes. A few months ago."

"Tell us about it! Tell it *now!*" Ted fairly shouted.

"Tell it *now!*" came Ruthie's piping echo.

"All right. I will. Only, the men who got me weren't Indians."

"British!" Becky exclaimed.

"Not exactly." Clark laughed. "Wait and see. It was near the river over toward Virginia. I have reasons for not telling the exact spot. You'll see why, later. I'd been doing a bit of surveying, looking for a nice big bite of land for myself, not too close to neighbors. I was stripped and painted and feathered; so that, if Indians saw me, they'd think I was one of them and let me alone instead of shooting me from behind a tree. I wasn't afraid of a white man shooting me for an Indian, because I thought there wasn't a white man in that wild country, except myself. I was slipping along when *Whang!!* a bullet struck a tree right beside me. I dropped into the brush and looked for somebody to shoot back at." He laughed. "They were smart, those fellows. One of them kept on shooting from the same direction, though I wondered why he aimed so high. His shots were well over any man's head. That was merely to keep my attention fixed in his direction while his friends slid around behind me. The first thing I knew they had me! They took my gun and everything else I had and tied my hands. There were four of them—white men."

"Outlaws?" Mrs. Landers asked. Clark laughed again.

"Yes, to put it mildly. They marched me off to their lair. Quite a settlement it was, too. Twenty

or more outlaws, the worst in the world. Imagine my situation—a white man who knew their headquarters and could tell the authorities if I got away out of there alive!”

“Did they try to kill you?” Ted cried.

“They meant to. But I meant them not to!” He chuckled. “I didn’t wait for them to brow-beat me. I started in first; I criticized their camp. It was pretty slovenly. Well, I talked so rough that I got them interested. After awhile I said I wanted food. I didn’t ask for it. I ordered it. And they gave it to me. Then I saw a man start to clean up a bit on the sly. Then I knew I was on top. I was the Chief. So I said; ‘I suppose you fellows think you’re going on living here like this, making bandit raids on the settlements all dressed up like Indians? Or waylaying hunters and surveyors like me, and stealing their outfits? Eh? A company of decent frontiersmen will come in here one day and hang every man jack of you! Come on, now; don’t be fools. Pack your stuff and come along with me!’ Well, there was a howl at that. They said they weren’t such fools as to go along with me into a jail. ‘Jail!’ I said. ‘What are you talking about? You’re coming along to fight. You’re going to Kaskaskia with me!’ ”

“Oh, Captain Clark!” Mrs. Landers exclaimed. “How did you dare?”

“Oh, I saw the situation. A group of restless men, bad men if you like, cooped up in that piece

of woods, getting feverish for something to do that meant shooting. Better take them to Kaskaskia than leave them to let themselves loose on some settlement. So the end of it was that I deposed their captain and made him my first lieutenant." His eyes twinkled merrily. Turning to Becky, he said, "that's Jeff Smoke. Poor Jeff. He was the Big Feathers till I came along and got captured. I've got eight of those fellows with me here."

"Mercy on us!" Mrs. Landers' involuntary exclamation of horror sent Clark off into a fit of laughter.

"Now, don't be afraid, Mrs. Landers. They won't misbehave. They know I'll shoot the first man who makes a misstep. They are soldiers now, not bandits. A bad lot to handle, for a man who doesn't understand them. But I know those men, and I can handle them. They dug me up thirty or forty more just like themselves, out of the mountains somewhere, another outlaw band led by Bill Canty's cousin. Well, that pretty nearly gives me my army, eh? It's a good start, anyway. So you see, Ted, sometimes the quickest way to raise a fighting force is to let one capture you. Then as soon as they have *got* you, you steal them. And there's your army. Simplest thing in the world!"

"Yeh," Simon drawled, "if yer know haow. But if yer *don't*——! Huh!"

"Nothing's simple if you don't know how," Clark rejoined, grinning.

"Wal, naow that we've all heard what kind o' honest, God-fearin', disciplined troopers the Cap'n has brung us fer a Christmas present, I'll speak my piece like the youngsters M'is Landers larns in school—she's our school-ma'am, Cap'n. All Maybrook's goin' to meet fer dinner termorrer raound noon in the fort in honor o' Cap'n Clark an' his paowder an' his aoutlaws. An' after dinner there'll be presents an' a tree an' Santy Claus has give his word he'll be thar in person."

"Oh! Oh! Santy Claus!" Ruthie cried, clapping her hands.

"Yeh. I ben told from some as claim ter have seen him that Santy's a large man an' somethin' my build." He winked solemnly at Becky.

"We'll bring the turkeys to the fort," Mrs. Landers said, "and anything else we can supply."

Clark and Kenton left in a few moments.

"I like *him*!" said Ted, as the door closed behind Clark.

"Oh, yes! Don't you, too, Mother?" Becky was kindled with admiration. Her mother smiled back at her. "And wasn't it wonderful to hear him tell about how he just walked off with all those bandits? But anybody can see why men are crazy about him and will go anywhere with him—do anything on earth he orders!"

"Yes, indeed," Mrs. Landers agreed heartily. But evidently her mind was on another phase of the matter; for, after Becky had put out the candle

and tucked into bed beside her mother, she heard Mrs. Landers murmur to herself:

"Eight of those terrible bandits in Maybrook! Eight of them!"

Becky bit her pillow, to smother the sudden undutiful laugh.

CHAPTER III

SANTA CLAUS ON THE FRONTIER

WHATEVER her secret feelings about Captain Clark's "army," Mrs. Landers was determined to be ruled by the Christmas spirit. As she and Becky breakfasted by the light of candles which they had made themselves from bear's tallow, she brought up the matter of presents for the undesirable visitors. She suggested tobacco pouches.

"Mother," Becky said, naughtily, "aren't you trying to comfort yourself with the idea that, if you give them presents, they will feel in honor bound not to steal everything in the house?"

"You're a bad girl," Mrs. Landers replied, smiling in spite of herself. "Still," she added, "it might help."

Becky giggled.

"Anyway," she said, "it is nice of you to make the pouches. I'm glad we have the deerskin for them."

"I thought I'd sew the edges with colored yarn. I have a skein of the red yarn we got from the last trader who came here. Dear me, I wonder if we'll ever see a trader again?"

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"Some day we will, when the war is over, and the Indians are quiet."

"The Indians! *They* will never be quiet."

"Oh, yes, they will; they'll have to. But, of course, they hate settlers, because settlers drive the game away. I'm a hunter, myself, and I can understand how the Indians feel about the game. The deer were all around us when we first came here. Now I have to go several miles to get one. Mother, I want a bit of the red wool to mix with the cut deerhide fringes on Baby's moccasins."

"We'll send the children out of doors to play and then put the finishing touches to their presents. It seems a shame that all their Christmas presents should be just the things they need and would have to have if there were no such day as Christmas."

"Ah! Wait till you see the doll I've made for Ruthie! I didn't tell you about it because I wanted to give you a big surprise, too!"

"A doll, Becky?"

Becky put her finger on her lips. Sounds from the other room—the cabin had two rooms—indicated that Ted and Ruth were getting up.

"Ruthie, do you know what day it is?" they heard Ted ask.

"It's Kissmas," Ruthie answered.

"No, 't isn't. It's Thursday."

"Not Thursday. Kissmas. I know coz Santy Claus is coming. Santy Claus never comes Thurs-

day. Santy Claus comes Kissmas." Ruthie was not only positive but indignant.

"Merry Christmas, Ruthie!" Becky called out the greeting and fore-stalled the tears which would soon have poured from Ruth's Delft saucer-like eyes as the result of Ted's tactlessness. "Merry Christmas, Ted. Hurry, or Mother and I will eat all the corn bread and all the bacon."

The threat about the corn bread was enough to silence Ted. Corn was very precious in Kentucky in those days, far more precious than gold. Though the settlers' fields, lying close to the fort, might be planted safely since, at the seeding season, the Indians were planting their own fields far away in their towns, it was seldom that the corn was gathered without a battle. Often the red men came down and burned the cornfields before the harvesting. But the last year had been a fortunate one in this respect for Maybrook. The settlers had gathered all their corn and stored it in the fort without mishap because the Indians had concentrated their destructive efforts on Boonesborough and Harrodsburg, the two largest settlements in Kentucky. Ted therefore realized that it was more fun to eat corn bread, when there was corn bread to eat, than to tease Ruthie. He could tease Ruthie next year, when there might be no corn. So two contented and amiable children were presently busy at the breakfast table. After breakfast Ted brought in a few armfuls of wood and then took

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Ruthie out to play. Mrs. Landers and Becky washed the dishes and began their preparations for the dinner and the Christmas tree.

The dishes of the Landers household were chiefly homemade like the simple furnishings of the cabin. There were a few pewter plates and a pewter pitcher which had been brought from Virginia, but there was no china. The dishes and mugs, called noggins, were of hickory wood, rudely shaped and planed with a knife; most of the spoons also were made of wood. The soap with which they were washed was homemade, and the dishrag and dishtowel were pieces of linsey-woolsey spun and woven by Mrs. Landers.

The furniture of the cabin was as sparse as it was simple. The table was nailed to the log wall at one end; it had two legs to support the other end, and a dropleaf with deerhide hinges. The beds, also, were wooden slabs supported at one side by being nailed to the wall. The mattresses, which sometimes rested on pine boughs to make them more "springy," were filled with deerhair. Deerskins served as blankets. The rough puncheon flooring was strewn with deerskin rugs. Glass had not come into the outlying settlements yet. There was only one window, with a heavy solid shutter, hung on deerhide hinges inside, which could be quickly swung to and barred against Indians. The window panes were of thin cotton treated against weather with bear grease. In some cabins, in those days, the

panes were made of greased paper, but there was a scarcity of paper in Maybrook. Except on the coldest days the family relied on the open door to light the house. On the dark or cold days, they had their homemade candles.

"I think I'd better prepare the mincemeat first," Mrs. Landers said.

"Let me do the chopping. My hands are stronger than yours." Becky brought in the dried meat of a deer, killed by herself in autumn, and hacked away at it merrily with her big hunting knife. Then she "minced" the pieces with her tomahawk. Meanwhile Mrs. Landers produced a sack of nuts and another of dried service-berries. These were the ingredients of mincemeat on the frontier. The mixture was put on to boil presently in the big iron pot; and Mrs. Landers proceeded to make a very excellent pie crust out of a handful or so of her small stock of flour plentifully mixed with corn meal and shortened with bear grease. She baked the crust on hot stones in the fireplace. When the mincemeat and pie crust were cooked and set aside, she hung the turkeys over the fire to roast and then sat down near by to keep an eye on them while she plied her needle in making the deerskin tobacco pouches for eight alarming bandits.

"I want to show you Ruthie's doll now, Mother." Becky ran into the next room to fetch it. On the way back she paused at the open door, looking out.

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"Mother! That big hairy Jeff Smoke is playing with the children."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Landers. "Still, I don't suppose he will hurt them."

"He is teaching Ted to throw the tomahawk. I wish I had time to go out and practice with him. Simon is quite right when he says I throw 'like a gal.' I do. And it makes me feel so ashamed that I don't practice, for fear some of the men will see me and laugh at me."

"Becky, dear, I'm sure you do that as well as you do other things. I've seen you——"

"Ah, but you're only a woman, Mother," said her daughter. "It's these boys and men, who count here. One can't afford to have them laughing at one. I'll simply *have* to learn."

"Where is the doll?" Mrs. Landers asked, being more interested in that than in the arts of war and hunting.

"Look at her! Isn't she wonderful?"

Becky produced the doll for her mother's inspection with a gesture of triumph.

"But she is marvelous!" Mrs. Landers exclaimed.

She was indeed. Her soft white body was made of young deerskin "stuffed with hair," as Becky explained, "till she bounces!" Her eyes were two blue beads. Her nose was outlined in white beads; her mouth in red ones. Her short reddish brown hair had once been part of a fox's pelt. She wore a much ruffled dress of blue cotton with a fringed

sash of red yarn. A sunbonnet to match hung round her neck.

"Oh, Becky! Ruthie will be simply beside herself with joy."

Becky beamed with pleasure.

"Yes. Dear Baby! She *will* like it. But poor me! I'll have to make four more for the other little girls. That's the worst of being a girl as well as a boy!" She laughed. "Simon has made a wooden horse for Ted. It is just a big branch with a knotty end. And Simon has carved the knot into a horse's head." She giggled. "At least that is what he *says* it is. He pretended to be very much offended when I asked him what it was."

"Ah, my dear, if you could only have seen the dolls and the toys I and my brother had at Christmas when I was a little girl in Virginia. We had everything then," she sighed. "But I grew up and married a poor man who thought his only chance of doing well for his wife and children was to come to Kentucky——"

"Now, Mother darling, you must not let yourself have even one sad thought on Christmas Day. No French doll ever made you happier than my Kentucky doll will make Ruthie."

"That is true." Mrs. Landers smiled.

After all, she thought, it was better not to talk to her children about her own early life, with its sheltered ease. However happy it had been, it had hardly fitted her for these later experiences in the

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tragedy, poverty and peril of the frontier. Those experiences, indeed, had been harder for her than for her neighbors, because of it. Her children already took as matter of course things which still depressed or frightened her. Even in regretting that her daughter could not have a good education and social advantages, she realized that Becky was being prepared for the only life she would ever know—the hard, dangerous but vivid life of a frontier woman.

An hour or two later this delicately nurtured lady from Old Virginia and her vigorous Kentucky daughter were in the midst of a typical frontier jollification in the fort. The table was not nearly large enough for all the guests. Only those who were specially honored sat at it, such as Clark, Kenton, Mrs. Landers and a few others. Men and children squatted on the floor. Becky and some of the women passed round the platters. There was no lack of food! Besides turkeys and roasted deer there was that famous frontier dish called "stew pie." This was compounded of deer, bear, rabbit (and pork if the settlement boasted pigs), all boiled together for hours in an iron pot. No celebration was held without a stew pie to bless it! Corn bread went with the meats. Last of all came the "mince pie," of course. They had real tea to drink because Clark had brought some with him from Virginia to distribute among his friends. A kind of tea-plant grew in Kentucky which the settlers used for

a beverage, but it had not the good flavor of imported tea.

After dinner, while the women washed the dishes, the men exchanged tales about hunting or about fights with Indians. Suddenly every one was startled by a tremendous knocking on the door accompanied by the ringing of a cow-bell. Then the door was flung open to admit the Santa Claus of Maybrook. Shrieks of delight from the children and guffaws from the men greeted such a Father Christmas as surely never descended a chimney in any civilized community. He was a very big man, to begin with, a giant in height and girth. If the guests had not known that he was St. Nicholas from the Land of the Reindeer, they might have thought he was Simon Kenton in strange trappings; for Kenton was the only man of that size in Kentucky. He wore a red blanket and his face was almost overgrown with shreds of white cotton.

"Santy! Santy! Santy!" The children shouted and made a dash for him, with outstretched hands.

"Hyar naow! Git back thar!" Simon roared. "Fust one as touches Santy don't git no presents off'n that thar tree." He rang his bell violently to emphasize his threat.

"Better keep yer hands ter home, chillun," Jeff Smoke advised loudly. "That ol'-timer's sure done grown enough moss on him ter be full o' wood-ticks."

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"Hyar naow!" Simon roared again. "Don't yer call Santy no names. 'Tain't allaowed."

"Whar yer come from, stranger?" another man asked. "'Scuse me fer askin', but I never seen a man with your kind o' beard afore."

Simon shook his bell at the speaker.

"I come from a country whar thar ain't no impident fellers like yer! Ain't no bad men allaowed ter live thar neither."

"So they had ter put yer out, eh? Haw! Haw!" Jeff Smoke rolled on the floor in the ecstasy caused by his own wit.

"Shet up, naow!" Simon commanded. "I come hyar ter give presents ter good chillun an' not ter pass words with no-accaount men. Becky Landers! Come hyar an' pass the presents raound when I take 'em off'n the tree. I don't trust nobody else," he concluded darkly.

"Wall! If this ain't a doll!" he exclaimed. "An' it's fer lil Ruthie Landers. Ain't it handsome?" Then he whispered hoarsely to Becky, "Yer made it? Smart gall"

Ruthie tripped up to receive her doll; and, hugging it tightly to her breast, ran to show it to her mother. Then, fairly dancing with delight, she went around the room exhibiting it to everybody.

"An' I declar' hyar's a horse fer Ted Landers! The minute I seen its head I knowed 'twas a horse. An' that shows I got more sense'n some folks I

could name." Simon nudged Becky, who giggled at him.

One by one the few children of Maybrook received their primitive toys and ran out of doors to play with them. Presently Simon took down the eight tobacco pouches which Mrs. Landers had tied together and marked "one for each of Captain Clark's soldiers!" Simon read the words aloud slowly.

"Sojers!" he snorted. "Sojers! Wal, M'is Landers is a fine lady an' I wouldn't say a word agin' anything she wrote. An' Cap'n Clark's a fine Cap'n, an' I wouldn't say a word agin' his army. Sojers they is, fer all *I* got ter say. So, come on, naow, Sojers, an' git yer terbaccer paouches. But I'm tellin' yer fair an' squar' that Kaintuck is a free country an' a man can *think* what he durn pleases. *An' I'm thinkin' hard!*"

"Stop it afore yer head busts," yelled Smoke. "Haw! Haw!" He came up and took the pouches for himself and his companions. He made an awkward attempt at a bow to Mrs. Landers. "Ma'am, ye're sartinly a kind lady. An' we're much obleeged fer yer kindness. Bill Cauty an' me uster live round hyar oncet an'—an'—I'm sure glad— an' I guess yer glad yerself—as how when we bein' poor men with no property o' our own—was—was—er—*huntin' round*, so ter speak, we never took nothin' that belonged ter yer. Thank yer kindly fer yer kindness."

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As soon as the last present was bestowed, Captain Clark made a short speech of thanks for the welcome which Maybrook had given to him and his men, and he did not forget to say a few words in praise of Becky Landers "whose shot saved the powder which will save Kentucky." Jeff Smoke took the allusion to Becky as his cue to start a war-whoop, which his comrades and Clark took up and kept going for several minutes. Becky stood by, blushing crimson, her eyes sparkling.

"Mother, I know now exactly how queens feel when all the people blow trumpets," she whispered blissfully.

CHAPTER IV

BECKY WELCOMES A FRIEND

THE next day Clark departed for Louisville. But before he set out, Becky Landers held a private and very important conference with him.

Clark was sitting on a stump cleaning his rifle. Becky squatted on a log and laid her own gun across her knees.

"Captain Clark," she said, "I must talk to you about something which I can't tell Mother. I can't even tell Simon, because, while Simon is a wonderful friend, he has some—well—some old-fashioned ideas."

"He has?" Clark concealed his amusement. "I wouldn't have thought that of Simon."

"Well, it's true. And so I have to be careful, because I can't let his old-fashioned ideas get in my way. I don't want you to think I'm deceitful. I'm not. I'm just careful."

Clark smiled in spite of himself. "And so you think you need not be what you call 'careful' with me, eh? I feel flattered."

"No. Because you're not careful, yourself. If you were, you'd never dare go away into the Illinois country to attack the British forts. Even Simon

thinks you are quite mad to attempt it. And Simon is no coward."

"Right. Only Simon isn't a soldier. Of course, I'm taking chances, but I expect to succeed."

"You will, I know. Now, before I talk about my own plans, I want to tell you more about my brother. You see, my father was killed by Indians when I was a little girl. That was in Cumberland Gap, as we were coming into Kentucky. The other settlers took care of mother and of us small children and, because we were all very poor, we came on here and took up land and planted Maybrook. Ruthie was born six months after father was killed. You know how it is in Kentucky. Everybody has to work, and plant, and shoot and look after himself. But when a woman is alone, like mother is, and isn't a bit strong——" she paused, her brow clouding with memories.

"Yes. It's terrible for your mother."

"Mother's proud and she isn't selfish; and so she has always tried not to be a burden on her neighbors. But I suppose there *are* women who just *can't* learn to shoot?"

"I shouldn't wonder." Again he checked a smile.

"If Indians attacked her children, mother would rush at them—bare-handed probably—and get killed. She's no coward. But it would never occur to her to take up a good position behind the door, or a tree, and pick off the leader by sending a bullet through his head. You see the difference?"

"I do."

"Anyway, she just *can't* shoot. She hits everything but the target." Becky giggled. "So when Rod, my brother, and I were very young, we realized that *we* had to—to take hold of things. Simon saw it, too. He trained us. And then Indians stole Rod. Poor mother nearly died. She worships Rod."

"And now you pack the only gun in the family," Clark commented.

"Yes. I'm a good shot, fortunately, so we don't go hungry. But I was speaking of Rod and the Indians. Before the raids began, Indians used to come down from the Scioto and trade here. And they made an awful fuss over Rod. And I remember one Indian said to me that they had told all the Ohio tribes about him; and that their chief had made a present, to another chief from the Illinois, of a pouch Rod had given him. He said that now the Illinois Indians wanted to see Rod. And he tried to get Rod to go with them. When they came back in the raid, they had a few Illinois Indians with them. They came from Kaskaskia. And I'm sure they really came to capture Rod."

"That sounds very likely. Sometimes Indians wait and scheme for years to get a boy, or even a man, they want."

"If Rod doesn't come back, mother will just die. And the children need him, too. Just imagine

how helpless they would be if anything happened to me!"

"I can see that." There was a flash of admiration in his glance.

"So I have to go to Kaskaskia and get Rod."

"What!" Clark stared at her.

"Yes. That is what I can't tell dear old-fashioned Simon. He says 'warpath's no place for gals.' Silly Simon."

"Very silly," Clark echoed mechanically, still staring at her.

"I knew you'd see at once that it is perfectly all right for me to go to Kaskaskia with you——"

"Oh!" he interrupted involuntarily. "Oh—you're going with us?"

"Yes. I can't ask you to spend your time there hunting for Rod, because you'll be busy fighting. And, anyway, you wouldn't know Rod when you saw him. So I must go. Of course, I trust you not to mention it to Simon. He would do something to prevent me from going."

"All right. I won't mention it," Clark agreed. He felt sorry to be deceiving her, but he did not know what to say. It would be useless to tell her of the great dangers that would beset his march into the Illinois. Indeed, she would be hurt if he did. She would feel that he was insulting her, doubting her courage and her ability to hold her own on the trail. But he would not take her, of course. The

warpath *was* no place for girls. Simon was right about that!

"What a shame to trick her!" he thought, looking into her clear trusting eyes as he shook hands with her. He watched her skipping across the field gaily towards home. "Brave, unselfish, little girl! But you'll never march into the Illinois, little Becky, fortunately for you."

His humane musings only served to show how little George Rogers Clark really knew about Rebecca Ann Landers—to give Becky her full name, for once.

Immediately after Clark's departure, Simon Kenton and a small party of Maybrookians started for Boonesborough with the consignment of powder and lead which Clark had left for the protection of the Kentucky forts. Boonesborough was to be the distributing center. Men would come from the other stations—such as Harrodsburg, St. Asaph's, and so forth—to Boonesborough, get their allotment and take it home. It was generally felt throughout Kentucky that the coming year would be harder than any which had preceded it. Inevitably the British Commander at Detroit, Governor Hamilton, would have his forces increased and better organized; and it was to be expected that he would have won a large number of Indian allies. It would require little persuasion on his part to bring all the tribes of the Ohio and Illinois countries under his banner. The red man, living by hunting,

was naturally the enemy of the settler who reared walls on the hunting grounds and so drove away the deer. Above all were the Kentucky settlers hated. For Kentucky—"the beloved old fields"—was the open hunting pasture of many tribes who, by common consent, had never reared an Indian town in it, nor made a permanent camp. Once a group of Shawanos had defied fate and built a town near Blue Licks, but they had been driven out by a red army and summarily punished for their breach of faith. Kentucky was not only the vast hunting ground of many tribes; it was also their warpath—their "dark and bloody ground." Through Kentucky the Tennessee tribes went north to fight the Ohio Indians; and through Kentucky came the Ohio Indians—and sometimes even the far-off Iroquois—to raid the Cherokee towns. None of these tribes wanted the nuisance of white settlements running as barriers across their ancient war trail! They were, therefore, the natural allies of any white warriors, British or French or Spanish, who would help them drive the American settlers out of Kentucky. It was because they realized these things that the Kentucky settlers expected a bad year and were hastening their preparations for defense. And it was because he knew these things that George Rogers Clark had resolved to march into the Illinois country, capture first the nearest British posts, Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Vincennes, and then go on north and attack Detroit itself. Once these forts were in

American hands, the Indians would be unable to procure ammunition and their raids on Kentucky would cease.

Partly because Indians preferred to fight from ambush, they very seldom took the warpath before the trees and bushes were in full leaf. Summer was their fighting season. Therefore, if Kenton took the powder and lead to Boonesborough at once, the settlers from the other forts would have time, and a safe trail, to bring their share of it home. They could also go to the Salt Licks to collect the salt which was a pioneer necessity, because, being well armed, they need not fear a skirmish with any small party of Ohio Indians who might be laying in their own supply of salt at the same time.

The visit of Clark and Kenton's expedition to Boonesborough should have provided excitement enough for a quiet little post like Maybrook in mid-winter. But the day which saw the two parties on their way had hardly waned into dusk before Daniel Boone arrived unexpectedly, attended by John Floyd and four other young men from Otter Creek.

"Hello thar, Becky Landers!" the famous pioneer of the Old West called out, seeing Becky across the yard as he entered the gate. "Come hyar an' see what I brought yer!"

Becky had seen already. As she sprinted towards Boone's party, a girl of about her own age raced to meet her. They clasped and hugged each other, laughing with delight.

"Oh, Jemmy! Oh, Jemmy Boone!"

"Oh, Becky! Isn't it grand? I'm going to stay all winter."

"Oh, Jemmy! How wonderful!"

"Yeh, that's the idea," Boone explained, watching their delighted embraces with keen pleasure. "About thirty of us from Boonesborough an' round thar was startin' fer Salt Licks. An' it struck me as a right smart notion ter fetch Jemmy along ter Maybrook so she could go ter school ter M'is Landers all winter. My next oldest gal is big enough now ter help her maw; an' my wife an' me want Jemmy to start gittin' a bit o' larnin'. So hyar we be."

"Oh! Oh! it's just splendid!" Becky gasped.

"Isn't it?" Jemmy answered, beaming.

Jemima Boone was a handsome sturdy girl. Like her father she had a fresh rosy complexion, beautiful clear deep blue eyes and black hair. Like him, also, she had a calm expression and a slow speech which were very misleading. They suggested anything but the quick wit and the capacity for swift daring action which the girl had inherited in a degree from her father. It was just that manner of Daniel Boone's which had fooled his Indian captors on the several occasions when he had fallen into their hands. It had thrown them off guard for a couple of minutes, which was all the time Daniel needed to slip into the forest or a maize field and hide himself until they gave up looking for him.

"I was right glad when I met Simon goin' down with the powder," Boone said. "Boonesborough's got enough till summer; but *then* we'll sure need it. Goin' ter be a bad summer, account o' Injuns. Got ter expect it. Reason I can't stay and visit is that us fellers has ter git our salt boiled an' packed home quick an' then work like blazes ter git the new fort built. We got all one side o' the wall o' the yard ter set up. The rest o' it is 'most done. If the Injuns was ter come down now, they could wipe us out. But we'll have a snowfall ternight out o' them clouds. An' Injuns don't fancy long walks through snow—gits their toes cold, mebbe. Lucky fer us they think so much o' their toes! But it's sertain sure we'll have ter rustle ter finish the fort before warm weather, when the Injuns start comin' with the flies."

"You can stay long enough to have supper, can't you, Mr. Boone?" Mrs. Landers asked.

"No, ma'am. I thank yer. We'll eat our jerked meat while we're travelin'. We want ter catch up with our party afore they reach Salt Licks if we can. There's only six o' us here. An' that ain't much of a troop if we should run inter a band o' them Sciotos goin' down ter boil their own salt. No, thank yer, ma'am, I'll jes' kiss my Jemmy good-bye an' take the trail on the run."

Hand-in-hand, Becky and Jemmy watched Boone and his five companions melt into the shadows of

the wilderness under the bluish black cover of a snow-filled sky.

Mrs. Landers put her arm round Jemmy and kissed her.

"No wonder every one loves your father so much," she said. "He is so brave, and yet so gentle and kind. It gives me courage and a sense of protection just to see him—poor little coward that I am."

"Why, Mrs. Landers!" Jemmy exclaimed, shocked, "You're not a coward. You mustn't say that."

"Of course she isn't," Becky agreed scornfully. "All that's the matter with Mother is she hasn't got real used to Kentucky yet."

"I shall never get 'real used' to it," Mrs. Landers answered with a sigh. "And, Becky, 'real used' is *not* grammatical."

"Yes, School-Ma'am!" Becky giggled.

"Oh, Mrs. Landers, I'm crazy, I'm so happy about staying all winter with you and Becky!" Jemmy exclaimed.

"And we are so very happy to have you, dear. I think your father must have been joking when he said you needed to go to school, because I notice that your speech is at least as correct as Becky's."

"No, he wasn't joking. He wants me to learn things out of your books. There are almost no books in Boonesborough. But Mr. Watts, one of the new settlers, is a very well-educated man. And

he has been teaching some of us to 'talk English,' as he says, but he hasn't taught us anything in books. I can hardly read at all—and I can't spell—or add figures."

"Well, we shall see what we can do about it," Mrs. Landers said, smiling affectionately at her.

"Isn't Mother pretty when she smiles like that?" Becky asked with contented pride.

"Oh, really, Becky!" Mrs. Landers blushed.

"But you are," Jemmy asserted. "You have a dimple. I really must tell you a good story about yourself, Mrs. Landers. Last winter there was a dreadful man in Boonesborough, but you probably know him, because we heard he'd been chased out of Maybrook. Jeff Smoke."

"Oh, yes! We know him!" Becky giggled. "What's the story?"

"Well, he stole right and left. The end of *him* happened when he stole Mrs. Calloway's crazy quilt. She'd brought it all the way from Carolina, and she just about worshipped it. Dad got it back for her. Well, Mrs. Calloway is awfully nice if you don't rile her. But she was riled proper at Jeff Smoke. She followed him to the gate, when Dad and the others were sending him away, and she called him such names! The things she said to that man! And that awful Jeff turned around and said, 'Ma'am, I advise yer ter take keer o' yer husband. Coz if he leaves yer a widder I ain't goin' ter marry ver! Thar's only one widder in Ol' Kaintuck I'd

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go ter work fer. An' that's M'is Landers. My! but she's a purty lil creeter!' Dad loves to tell that story." Jemmy bubbled over with mirth; and Mrs. Landers, herself, burst out laughing.

"Oh, you purty lil creeter!" Becky shouted, waltzing her mother round.

"It's snowing," Jemmy said presently, as their laughter subsided.

"We'll go in and have supper. And then I'll tell you the latest news about Jeff Smoke," said Becky as they filed into the cabin where Ted and Ruthie, both hungry and indignant, awaited their mother and cook.

During the meal, Becky told Jemmy all about George Rogers Clark and her Indian turkeys, and about how Jeff Smoke, Bill Canty and the other outlaws became soldiers.

CHAPTER V

BECKY'S BALL GAME

IT snowed heavily for several days; then the sun came back. On that first sunny afternoon all the Maybrook children, shepherded by Becky and Jemmy, were outside the fort enjoying winter sports to the full. Becky played as gaily as the others, although she had a serious problem on her mind. She was thinking of Simon Kenton's last words to her as he left for Boonesborough and of something he had said about her, in her hearing, earlier in the day—to Clark, of all people!

It had been very pleasant to have Simon call back to her jovially, as he went out at the gate:

"Naow, Becky, I'm leavin' Maybrook in yer cyare. Don't seem likely Injuns'll come whoopin' through this chill an' the snow we'll sure have afore termorrer. But they mout. I'm caountin' on yer, gal, ter stand 'em off."

And it had been great fun to strike a warlike attitude and answer:

"I sure will!"

But how about those other remarks of Simon's? No; they were not quite so pleasant to remember, above all since they had been made to Clark!

"That gal's twins, I tell yer!" Simon had said to the young commander. "She kin do all a woman's jobs raound the haouse, like spinnin' an' weavin' an' cookin' an' washin' an' tellin' yarns ter amuse the young uns. An' she's a fust-class man, too. She's a good shot, she's got a sharp eye fer things a scaout oughter notice, an' she kin trail game right smart. Only thing Becky never larned as good as a boy is haow ter throw a tomahawk. She throws like a gal." At this point, to make matters worse, Simon made a grotesque imitation of Becky's gesture, and even Clark roared at it. "An' o' course she ain't thar when it comes ter rough an' tumble fightin'," Simon went on; "but she kin mimic a fawn an' a turkey an' a wolf abaout as good as any Injun. Yes, sir! That gal's the smartest brace o' twins in Ol' Kaintuck!"

Now this was not the first time that Simon had accused her of throwing like a girl. She had always laughingly admitted it and rather taken it for granted that this was one thing she could not learn to do expertly because she was a girl. But to have it said before Clark——! It had sounded quite different then! It had stung her pride and, more, it had made her fear that Clark would think her an impractical and even stupid person who ought not to be taken to the Illinois.

"Simon's just got to stop saying I throw like a girl," she said to herself, determinedly, her brows drawn into a pucker. "And the way to make him

stop saying it is to learn to throw like a boy. Of course, I can. *I will!*"

And this was the real reason why Becky Landers was piling up a huge heap of well-made snowballs on the ground just outside the fort on the first sunny afternoon after the snowfall. The children watched the heap grow, in pleased anticipation of the merry time they would have presently when they began to pelt one another.

"It's good to be able to play out here and feel safe," Jemima Boone said to her.

"Yes, but, Jemmy, every time I look at those low drifts among the trees over there along the creek, I think what a good hiding place they would make for Indians. They could come sneaking along the deep bed of the brook and crawl up the bank and hide behind those drifts without any of us seeing them."

"Well," Jemmy answered, "it's a good thing for us that Indians don't take the warpath in winter. They've never let any tribe settle in Kentucky coz all the tribes wanted to keep it for a hunting ground. So when any of the Ohio Indians make a raid on us they have to travel quite a long way from their own towns; and there's no cover for them and any wide-awake scout can see them a long way off. Besides, this is their dancing season in the Indian towns. And red men love dancing almost as much as they love fighting."

"That's all true," said Becky thoughtfully. "But I can't help wondering——" she paused.

"What?" Jemmy asked.

"Well, we could be sure that Indians by themselves wouldn't make that long march in the snow and cold. But they've got white men with them now. There's that dreadful man who led them in the raid when they wiped out Stoners. We can just *know* that *he* wouldn't let a snowfall stop him. I can almost see him coming up out of the center of the earth with flaming horns and his feet, still red hot, burning up every bit of snow along his trail!"

"You mean De Quindre?" Jemmy's face grew grave. "Dad knows him. He met him out hunting seven years ago. Dad says he's really a wonderful man on trail, better than any Indian, never gets tired, and that he is a crack shot and an awfully fast runner."

"Is he a halfbreed?"

"Oh, no. He's a Frenchman from Canada, Dad says, the finest mannered gentleman he ever saw, and awfully handsome too."

"So is a wolf handsome, especially in winter when its fur is thick. It looks beautiful, streaking away over the crust of the snow. But if you're within shooting distance you kill it! Anyway, if De Quindre is a white man and a gentleman, why doesn't he act like one?" Becky said disgustedly. "He's simply a fiend."

"Oh, yes. He's a fiend," Jemmy agreed. "Just

thinking about him gives me cold chills along my hair roots. But I doubt if even De Quindre could get the Indians to make that long trip in winter. Let's play and forget him."

With Becky as captain of one side and Jemmy leading the opposing forces, the young folk of Maybrook were presently in the midst of a snowy war punctuated with shrieks of delight.

"Jemmy," Becky gasped, after a brisk ten minutes of battle, "I'm going to practice throwing my tomahawk now. So you go on with the game and count me out. The sky is clouding over and looks like more snow. Anyway, the sun'll set before so very long, and I've got to make myself a tomahawk-thrower that Simon can't laugh at before sundown!"

The first thing, Becky decided, was to improve her aim. She would make sure that she could hit the trunk of a certain willow tree which stood out from the coppice fringing the brook, before she began to practice the special throw which sent the tomahawk whirling through the air to bury its blade in the target, instead of hitting it a useless blow and falling to the ground. Separating from the group at play, she quickly made a small heap of snowballs for herself and proceeded upon the course of education she had mapped out. Simon, she told herself defiantly, had laughed his last laugh! Her first ball hit the center of the willow trunk and splattered away from it. Becky's lips tightened in a grim little smile.

"Simon would laugh harder than ever at that," she muttered. "Coz he'd know it was only a chance shot. I threw before I'd aimed and just hit the tree by accident." She threw again—and missed.

On the snowy frozen bed of the creek, just below the coppice, a band of feathered Indians in war paint, led by a white man, came to a halt. The white man was as bronzed and hawk-faced as any red man but his natural coloring was much lighter. The hair showing under his cap was a brownish tan; his piercing eyes were a light gray-green. He was tall, supple and muscular, but his hands and feet were almost as small as a woman's. Those graceful moccasined feet had not burned up all the snow before him, literally, but Captain Dagniaux De Quindre had come almost as fast as if infernal flames had cleared a trail for him—a hundred miles by forced marches, with a band of disgruntled savages whom he had induced to accompany him only by high promises of the loot of rich trading supplies and by inflaming appeals to their patriotism—"Wipe these palefaces out of the land, that Kentucky may be once again the red man's hunting ground!" De Quindre had learned from Indians that Clark had been seen on the river and he guessed that a large consignment of powder had arrived in Kentucky. Knowing the lay of the land, he had rightly surmised that Clark would make Boonesborough the supply depot for the settlements thereabout and then hasten on to Louisville with the rest of the

powder. De Quindre wanted to prevent the men of the various forts from getting their powder. He knew that the forts could not hold out against the British, in whose service he fought, unless they had ammunition. Fiend as he undoubtedly was, he was first of all a soldier; and it was his duty as a soldier to make it impossible for the Kentuckians to move that powder into the different settlements. That was why De Quindre and his red brigade were in Kentucky on this crisp winter day. His objective was Boonesborough. He intended to lurk in the neighborhood of that central fort and fall upon the small parties of men who came from the other forts for powder. His red warriors, however, did not want to go on to Boonesborough. They had sighted Maybrook and had made up their minds to raid it and then go home to the dancing. They were resentful about missing those dances. Maybrook was a small settlement, they said; it should be easy pickings, and De Quindre ought to be satisfied!

Finally, since neither wheedling nor curses availed, De Quindre compromised. He would wipe the war paint from his face, take the pack of small furs he carried for just this purpose, and present himself at the fort asking shelter. He spoke English perfectly and, some years ago when he was only a boy, he had played this same trick successfully on the British in the Seven Years' War that wrested Canada from France. The Indians were to wait for dark, which fell early on these winter days,

and then steal up and surround the fort. During the night he would open the gate for them. But it, on reaching the edge of the coppice where lay the drifts that would screen them, they found his tomahawk embedded in a tree, they were to start back towards Ohio; because that sign would mean either that the Maybrook settlers were aware of their presence and ready to fight them or that for some other good reason the raid must not be attempted.

While De Quindre was making his plans, a very white-faced paleface named Becky Landers was looking down upon him and his warriors from over the drifts in the coppice. At last Becky had thrown her tomahawk with the right twirl, the proper measure of force, and straight aim, and had driven it into the tree. Now indeed Simon would mock no more! She ran to recover it. What she saw below made her forget all about it. Almost paralyzed with fear, she clung to the tree and watched De Quindre remove his war paint, arrange his fur pack on his back, and then apparently give earnest instructions to a band of at least sixty savages. She pulled herself together and raced back as hard as she could go.

"Jemmy!" she called. Jemmy guessed at once by Becky's face that she had seen Indians. In Kentucky that look of terror meant nothing else. Rapidly, Becky related the facts. "Don't tell the others—some one might cry out—but get them inside as quickly as you can. And tell all the men. I'll stay

behind and throw snowballs after you. The Indians will think we don't know they are there. The white man—he must be De Quindre—I'm sure is coming first, alone, pretending to be a trapper. He knows we don't expect Indians in this weather. Get my rifle and put it just outside the gate." Mentally then and there Becky vowed that she would never step outside the fort again without her gun. It was hanging on the kitchen wall. Her tomahawk? She remembered suddenly. It was over there in the tree. She had no weapon but her wits.

"I'm a fool!" she told herself desperately. But she shouted merrily at the children and continued to throw snowballs after them. Before so very long she saw Jemmy slip her rifle outside. It was growing dusk now and the snow was beginning to fall again. She knew that, inside the walls, the settlers would be preparing as best they could to meet the onslaught. But what would happen to Kenton and his party if they should arrive now? And they were due—any time soon. She tried not to think of that horror as she went on with her solitary ball game.

"You amuse yourself charmingly."

Becky's heart stood still as the stranger's voice sounded behind her. She turned and looked into De Quindre's glittering greenish eyes. He removed his cap in salute, shaking the large flakes from it. Becky realized now that he had crawled west along the bank and come out at the back of the fort. For

the last half hour he had been snaking his way slowly and slyly just for the purpose of taking her by surprise. Perhaps he had even suspected her ruse, she thought. She was mistaken about this, but she was in deadly peril nevertheless. At first, De Quindre, who wanted to get on to Boonesborough, had intended to deceive his Indians. Without showing himself at the fort, he had planned to return to them presently and, with some false tale or other, induce them to go on. But the snow had begun to fall again. He knew that they would not go on to Boonesborough while it was snowing, no matter what he offered them. There was a chance, however, that if they spent the night killing and burning in Maybrook, and the next day dawned clear, they could then be persuaded to continue the march. He thought it worth trying. Therefore he was not going back to them now. Nor would he drive his tomahawk into a tree as a signal for them to go home. He would let them loose on Maybrook!

Becky recovered her breath and her wits at the same moment.

"Hullo," she said, cheerily. "I'm not amusing myself. I'm learning to throw straight so Simon can't say I throw like a 'gal' any more." He smiled.

"I must coax you to go on trail with me some day. Maybe you can kill some beaver for me with snowballs, eh?" He swung the pack off his shoulders to the ground.

"Are you a trapper?" she asked innocently.

"Oh, yes. I trap. I am clever at that."

"He thinks he has trapped Maybrook," Becky said to herself.

"Did you see any Indians on your way here?" she asked. He shook his head. "That's good," she went on. "Coz they'd have killed you, wouldn't they?"

"No doubt. But Indians stay in their lodges in winter."

"Yes," she agreed. "That's why it's safe to play out here."

"Quite safe," said De Quindre. "But wouldn't it be better to go inside? It is almost dark and the snow now falls heavily."

"Oh, let's wait a minute," she said. "I want you to watch me throw, and tell me if I really swing my arm now like a boy." She had a vague desperate notion that if Kenton's party appeared and the Indians attacked them, perhaps she could force De Quindre to call his savages off by threatening his own life with her rifle.

"All right." It really didn't matter, he thought, what they did for the next half hour or so. Long before now one of the red men must have crawled up to the outer fringe of the coppice and seen that his tomahawk was not in the tree. The Indians knew therefore that they were to fall on the fort that night. They were crowded in the creek bottom, waiting. So De Quindre patiently instructed

Becky Landers in the science of "throwing like a boy" for perhaps twenty minutes.

"I'm sure I've learned it now," she said at last. "If it were only light still and I had my tomahawk I could drive it into that tree every time."

He started violently, grasped her arm and peered down at her face. "What's that you say?" he exclaimed, amazed. What could this girl know of the signal he had arranged with his Indians?

"I was practicing with my tomahawk and I *did* throw it so it stuck in that tree over there. But I forgot to go and get it. So it's still there," she explained calmly, though she was trembling under the strong grip of his hand.

"When was that?" he demanded harshly.

Becky could see that he was terribly upset. Though she had no idea why he should be, the sight of his confusion helped her to overcome her fear. She answered honestly,

"About an hour and a half ago."

He calculated quickly—and saw what a trick Fate had played on him! The Indians had seen this girl's tomahawk in the tree at least an hour ago. That meant that they were already an hour's journey on their way home. And here he was alone in the enemy's country, likely to be hanged or shot by the men of Maybrook at any moment! He dropped her arm.

"*Diable!*" he muttered. "This situation is bad enough!"

What is bad enough can become even worse. He discovered that fact within three minutes. His eyes, sharper than hers, descried a half dozen figures moving hazily through the slanting snowfall towards the fort. He guessed that they were Maybrook men probably coming back from Boonesborough with their allotment of powder. In a moment more Becky saw them, too, and recognized the giant bulk of Simon Kenton heaving through the maze of flakes. She did not understand how they had come safely over the creek where she had seen the sixty Indians; but she did sense that the peril was past. She whirled away from the pseudo trapper and grabbed her rifle, and aimed it directly at his breast.

"March into the fort, Captain De Quindre," she cried, "or I'll drop you where you stand!"

The Frenchman's eyes flamed. He snatched his cap from his head and swept the ground with it in a grand gesture as he bowed very low before her.

"Mademoiselle," he said softly, "I am profoundly honored to have made your acquaintance."

The courtly manner and phrase under the circumstances took Becky completely by surprise. Her gun wobbled. She heard a chuckle from him as he spun round and streaked away on a zigzag course through the snowy dusk. She raised her rifle again and pointed it at his figure, which she could still see darting, like a flickering shadow across a misty white curtain, toward the profound darkness be-

yond the shrouded horizon. But just as she pulled the trigger, she jerked her arm impulsively upwards and fired high into the air.

To the returning Maybrook men, who shouted lustily in answer, the sound of her rifle was a greeting and a sign that all was well at home. To Dagniaux De Quindre, fleeing from the peril of armed men behind into the perils of the snowing dark and the lonely wilderness ahead, that shot, which he guessed had been deliberately fired high above his head, was a blast of triumph—and a challenge to him to come back and cross wits again with Becky Landers.

CHAPTER VI

BAD NEWS COMES TO MAYBROOK

“**W**HAT did I tell you-all?” Kenton demanded of Maybrook at large, when he heard the whole story. “Ain’t that gal a fust-class brave, when it comes ter schemin’ as well as shootin’? My stars, Becky Landers! It’s a pity yer don’t live east in Virginny or up thar in Philadelphy. They’d sure make yer Commander-in-Chief. Ho, ho! Ha, ha! The British would run fer sartain if a right smart gal like yerself got arter ’em!”

“A redcoat wouldn’t have a chancet,” was the comment of Al Hix, the blacksmith.

“Not shootin’ that feller was the only time sence yer was a kid, I guess, that yer missed yer aim that close,” Simon went on. “But what with dark an’ fallin’ snow an’ a smart scaout like De Quindre dartin’ criss-cross like a snake, ’tain’t so surprisin’ yer didn’t shoot him. Good thing if yer had. He’s a devil, that thar Frenchman.”

Becky merely nodded. She did not understand the impulse which had made her jerk her gun up and fire over De Quindre’s head. She only knew that, suddenly, she had felt strongly that she did not want him to die.

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"I just couldn't kill that man," she mused, with puzzled brow. "Of course, I *ought* to have killed him. But I couldn't. And, now, he'll come back some day with more Indians! But—I just couldn't. I suppose he is laughing at me for a bad shot. I don't like that. I wish I could have a chance some day to show him that, when I *do* aim at something, I hit it."

"Becky," Kenton broke in on her musings. "Did you git a right good squint at them redskins?"

"Yes, Simon. I stood just above them and looked directly down on them for some minutes. There were some Sciotos among them who have been here before." Becky meant that she had recognized several Ohio Indians of a tribe which made its home along the Scioto River.

"Wonder if Black Fish was with 'em. Did yer see a man 'most as much of a giant as me?"

"Yes," she answered eagerly. "An enormous man, only not so broad as you are. It was with him that De Quindre was talking chiefly. I could see that he was considered the most important warrior of the lot."

"He's the chief now. His name's Black Fish. Got a great reputation fer huntin' an' fightin'. Naow they've made him their fust chief. He only made friends with the British lately. Cut their throats as soon as ourn if he got the chancet. He's the one that captured Dan'l one time an' tried ter adopt him."

"Yes," Jemmy nodded. "And only two years ago he sent some scouts to meet Dad at Salt Licks offering to make him the next chief, after Black Fish's death, if he would only go with them. He promised to make peace with all the settlers and leave them alone in Kentucky. He was willing to promise almost anything to get Dad to go and be a Scioto."

"Wal, it's lucky Dan'l warn't raound hyar when Black Fish come along. An' moughty lucky Black Fish an' his braves—yer said they was abaout sixty eh, Becky?—come hyar 'stead o' goin' ter Salt Licks. They'd have captured Dan'l an' all the rest likely. Only thirty of 'em thar."

"Yes," said Mrs. Landers. "And what a fortunate thing that they did not go to Boonesborough!" she shuddered. "Mr. Boone was telling us that the palisade is not built yet."

"What I cyan't understand is, why they run off so quick an' left De Quindre alone behind 'em? 'Tain't like redskins not ter make a fight when they'd traveled such a long way ter do it. Redskins don't come ter Kaintuck jes' fer fun in these days. An' in winter, too. It's got me beat."

"Simon, I know why they ran away," Becky chuckled. "Black Fish must have seen my tomahawk in the willow trunk, where it landed when I threw it like a man—not like a girl, Simon Kenton, *but like a man!* It scared him to death."

Becky, joining merrily in the general laughter, little dreamed how close she had come to the truth.

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"Jemmy," she said, "tomorrow I'm going out into the woods to look at my traps. Do you want to go, too?"

Jemmy said enthusiastically that she did. But, before tomorrow dawned, poor Jemmy had received a crushing blow which put all thought of forest excursions out of her mind.

Just before dusk the look-out saw a man running and stumbling towards the fort. A nearer view showed him to be John Floyd, one of the young men who had left Maybrook with Boone for the salt springs a few days before. Floyd was so exhausted that he almost fell in at the gate. Revived with food and drink he told his terrible news.

"We traveled as fast as we could that first night," he said, "but the snow kept coming down thicker and thicker and slowed us up. We were trying to catch up with the main party by a short cut, and so we had to branch north a bit to avoid the big bluffs. We knew it was risky, getting so close to the Ohio, but we felt pretty sure no redskins would come down in such weather. Still, we tried to keep a sharp look-out, but with all that snow whirling around us we couldn't see far enough. First thing we knew we were surrounded by Indians—about sixty of them led by Chief Black Fish. There was no chance of a fight—six against sixty! They told us they had had a white man with them and had lost him somehow and had drifted back a bit to give him a chance to catch up with them."

"Yeh. That was De Quindre," said Kenton.

"So Daniel thought. Daniel said to us, 'Boys, if that white man is De Quindre, and I'll bet it is, he brought these redskins down here to raid Boonesborough. I don't doubt their spies have told them our walls aren't up yet, and maybe they've heard about Clark bringing powder. If that's so, De Quindre has come down to kill two birds with one stone. He means to destroy the settlement, and massacre every man, woman and child in Boonesborough, and also prevent the other stations from getting their powder.' And we agreed with him."

"I reckon Dan'l was right," Kenton remarked.

"That being most likely the case, Daniel thought there was only one thing to do—to keep Black Fish from going on to Boonesborough. He said that if the Indians got hold of a band of white prisoners they'd be satisfied and start for home. So he told Black Fish he was glad to meet him again and would like to go home with him. He said that he had a number of friends near by who felt the same way; they were tired of war and would join the Indians and live with them. Black Fish swallowed the hook. He said he didn't care about Boonesborough now that he had Boone; and, if he got a lot of Boone's friends too, so much the better. So Daniel said to me, 'John, I've got to lead these Indians to Salt Licks and let them capture our friends there. Some of us, maybe all of us, will be killed, either on the trail or when the Indians start cele-

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brating in their towns; but it's the only way to save those defenseless settlers in Boonesborough. You watch your chance to escape and tell the news.' Well, friends, I've told it."

"Oh, Jemmy! Poor Jemmy!" Becky burst into tears and flung her arms around her friend. Jemmy did not cry. She looked as if she had turned into stone under the shock. Jemmy worshipped her father.

"Jemmy, gal," Kenton put his hand on her shoulder, "this is a bad blow but it could be wuss. Black Fish don't want Dan'l Boone dead; he wants him alive. An' yer kin caount on Dan'l stayin' alive an' slippin' away from them thar redskins jes' like he done afore."

Mrs. Landers' lips were trembling and she was very pale, but there was a beautiful glow in her eyes as she said:

"It was like Daniel Boone to think first of all those helpless and defenseless ones in Boonesborough. It is that spirit of self-sacrifice and chivalrous protection in the men of Kentucky which makes us women able to bear the horrors we have to suffer here. But, Jemmy, I feel sure that your dear father will come back. The nobility of his heart is God's protection always with him."

"I ought to go back to poor Mother," Jemmy said dully; "but how can I? John ought not to have a girl along to look after in making the trip back."

"No, I wouldn't risk it," Floyd said. "You stay here, Jemmy, and you can trust me to care for your mother and to do everything I can for her and her children until Daniel gets back."

Although they all talked bravely about the mishap to Boone and the salt-makers, they knew how little likelihood there was that any of the white captives, even Daniel himself, would survive the season of drunken feasting and mad dancing in the Ohio Indian towns. That some would be tomahawked by drink-frenzied warriors and others burned at the stake was a foregone conclusion. It was only too probable that all of them would be butchered. Whether rightly or wrongly, it was believed by the Kentucky settlers that the British Governor, Hamilton, was paying the Indians for American scalps. They called him, in their furious contempt, the Hair-Buyer. It was this belief which doubled the fears which Jemmy and the Maybrook settlers felt for the fate of Daniel Boone and his companions. Perhaps Becky, resolute little optimist that she was, was the only one who really believed the comforting words spoken to poor Jemmy. Becky had long ago persuaded herself that her brother Rodney was alive and safe. And now she was just as certain that no worse evil would befall Boone than a few weeks, or possibly months, of captivity.

"Even if De Quindre catches up with Black Fish's Indians," she mused, "he won't egg them on to murder the prisoners. It wouldn't do *him* any good

to have them killed. He is much more likely to use his influence to get them taken to the British forts in the Illinois country, so that the Hair-Buyer can talk to them and find out just how well or badly prepared we are for war this summer. And maybe persuade some of them to come back and advise us to surrender. De Quindre is a fiend when he attacks a station. But he isn't an Indian. He is a white man—a clever white man—and a soldier. He thinks things out."

However, it would be just as well, she thought, if De Quindre should go on home to the Illinois without knowing anything about Black Fish's prisoners. Boone's chances of escape would be better.

Though she felt confident that Boone would return, Becky had difficulty in keeping back her tears when she looked at Jemmy's white face. Seeing Jemmy's heavy reddened eyelids at the breakfast table next morning she guessed that her friend had lain awake weeping all night.

"I shall ask Jemmy to do things to help me for awhile this morning," Mrs. Landers said to Becky when Jemmy was out of the room. "And then I shall try to get her to sleep. Are you really going to the trap line, dear? Is it safe?"

"Oh, yes. The Indians have gone home to celebrate. And, Mother, as I can't get back till late, anyway, I may camp in our old cabin all night; so don't expect me home."

"Oh, Becky! Aren't you afraid?"

"Nothing to be afraid of! The cabin is only a dozen miles away, and I want to see if it is still there. Maybe those red fiends burned it on their way down. Oh! I wonder if we'll ever have peace and safety in Kentucky, and be able to leave the fort and have our own homes, and plant our own fields again!"

She turned away quickly so that Jemmy, who was coming in, should not see the tears which suddenly splashed down on her cheeks. She was not thinking only of Jemmy's father, but of her own brother whom she loved and missed more than any one guessed.

CHAPTER VII

BECKY TRAPS BIG GAME

BECKY hit the trail at the first streak of dawn. She had her rifle over her shoulder and, round her waist in many windings, a stout hide rope with which she would bind her pack of furs on her back. She hoped for a good haul from her traps.

She wore an excellent pair of snowshoes, strong and light, and she made good time. As she went briskly along her thoughts busied themselves with a matter of great importance. This was her secret intent, never told to any one but Clark, to attach herself to his Illinois expedition. The tragic news brought by John Floyd had quickened her resolve. In sharing Jemmy's shock and sorrow she had become much more acutely conscious of her own grief and more keenly stinging aware of the heartbreak which her mother was enduring.

"I'm sure Captain Clark will take me," she said to herself, "unless Simon finds out and interferes. I must think of a plan so that I can mix into the band of Clark's men without their knowing who I am, just in case Simon or something else changes his mind. If we get out on trail far enough before they find out, they'll have to take me on all the

way. They won't dare leave me alone in the woods some place a hundred miles from Maybrook. If I'm anything like the smart boy Simon sometimes calls me, I ought to be smart enough to play a little easy trick like that. I've simply *got* to go and find Rod. If I don't, Mother will grieve to death!"

Her eyes filled again. She brushed her tears away and resolutely turned her thoughts from the subject. She had plenty of hard work to do that day; and, anyway, grief was not sensible. Tears achieved nothing and they stung her pride; for Becky was a doer, not a weeper.

As soon as she reached her first trap, she found work to do. A young lynx lay there dead but, happily for Becky, not frozen stiff or she might have had to abandon him; for removing a frozen hide from a frozen carcass is not a task to be undertaken lightly. Skinning is not a pleasant job at its easiest, but Becky, characteristically, went about it without making a fuss, since it had to be done. She inserted the tip of her very sharp knife under the dead animal's chin and ran it in a straight line down his belly; then she made four short slits on the underside of his legs. The removal of the skin, by slow gentle pulling, helped frequently by sliding the blade under, called for her full quota of skill and patience. The skin once free, she took up a blunt, wedge-shaped blade set in a cross-piece of wood, somewhat like a hatchet broken off short at its handle, and scraped away all the larger pieces of

meat that adhered to the inside. Then, having fastened the pelt securely to her by a coil of her hide rope, she hastened on to her next trap some distance away. It yielded a raccoon, which she decided would serve for the new cap needed by her small brother.

The third and fourth traps were empty, but from the fifth she plucked her dinner, a fat young possum. She carried him along, rebelling not at all that the whole of him was heavier than his pelt. It was nearing sunset when, after having added several good small furs to her pack, she veered along the old trail, covered now by snow, towards the cabin. Her heart leaped when she came in sight of it shortly, and knew that the Indians had not fired it. She began to pick her steps more carefully because she remembered that, in this last bit of cop-pice, there was an old bear pit. A moment later she stopped short, catching her breath; and, in a trice, she had hidden herself behind a tree and was bringing her rifle round for a shot.

Hardly fifty yards ahead of her a large wolf was moving in a way that roused her curiosity. He was padding slowly in wide circles about one spot.

"That must be the bear pit," she said to herself; "and from the looks of things I'd say a deer had fallen into it. I fancy the poor thing's alive and thrashing about, and that's why the wolf doesn't go closer. He wants to make sure he can get his meal without getting hurt."

Becky waited until the wolf made one of his stops and stood still, sniffing; then she shot him through the head.

"There's a coat for Ruthie," she thought jubilantly. It would be fun to take her small sister a new coat. She reloaded and ran on.

"I'll have to shoot the poor deer," she mused, "but that will be an easier death for it than being torn by a wolf."

She was surprised that she heard no sound at all as she neared the mouth of the pit; for her approach should have stirred the terrified creature below as much as the wolf's. There was something odd about this. She moved more cautiously now, looking carefully about for other tracks and wondering what was down in that hole.

She saw no tracks except the wolf's. But presently her keenly roving glance lit upon a dark object sticking up out of the snow at the edge of the pit. It was a rifle butt.

The color fled from her cheeks and her heart jumped with the sudden shock of terror. Something human was in that pit; had been there, too, since the beginning of the snowfall, three days, because all its footprints had been covered. Something human, too badly injured to get out, had been fending off a hungry wolf for hours and had then, at the sound of a rifle near by, become utterly quiet. Who was it? A white man who feared that the shot had been an Indian's? Or an Indian who feared i-

had been a white man's? Was it one of Black Fish's murderous band? The safest thing for Becky Landers to do, of course, was to flee, leaving that something human to its sure fate. But it simply wasn't in Becky to do that.

She crept to the brink and looked down into the fierce gaunt face of Dagniaux De Quindre. The lower half of his body was partly covered with snow. He was braced back against the wall of the pit, supporting himself by his left hand, which gripped a stone or a tree root. In his right hand he held a hunting knife. His eyes burned, and his face almost seemed to be gashed, so deep were the lines of pain in it. For a few seconds Becky and De Quindre stared silently at each other. Becky's thoughts were whirling. Here was one of the savagest frontier fighters in the British service, who had led the Indians in some of their bloody raids on Kentucky. How recently, too, he had attempted to launch his feathered and painted brigade on Maybrook! It was De Quindre who spoke first.

"Mademoiselle, it is a pleasure to meet you again," he said gallantly. "For it is indeed both a pleasure and an honor for a man who knows that, whatever sins he has committed, he is at least no coward, to die by one straight shot from a brave girl's rifle rather than from starvation or wolves. As you guess, doubtless, I injured myself too badly in falling to be able to climb out."

Becky said nothing at all for some minutes; then she shook her head slowly.

"No. I can't do that. I'd feel like a murderer."

He smiled quizzically.

"But why, Mademoiselle? It would be only a natural act of war, wholly patriotic, and, in its way, merciful."

She shook her head again.

"Maybe that's so," she said. "But I can't do it. I guess this is one of those things that happen sometimes, where you have to choose between your own life and some one else's—and you just can't choose your own. I know you're as bad as any redskin; worse, coz you're white. If I help you out you'll probably kill me with your knife, to make sure that I can't tell the men you're here. But I've got to help you, just the same."

For an instant more he stared up piercingly into the pallid face bending over him. Then he muttered something in French and tossed his knife over the edge of the pit. She picked it up and stuck it in her belt.

"On my word of honor, Mademoiselle, which you will be safe in accepting, I have no other weapon. I lost my rifle as I fell."

With trembling fingers, Becky unwound the rope from her pack of furs. She fastened one end of it securely round a tree and dropped the other end to him.

"If you tie it round you and can help yourself a

little with your hands, perhaps I can pull you up, if I use all my strength. We'll have to try it, anyway."

It was a slow, difficult and painful feat to haul the injured man out of the pit. Becky was exhausted when, at last, De Quindre crawled over the rim and lay gasping on the snow. She looked from him to the dead wolf, and a violent trembling seized her, so that she clung to the tree to save herself from falling.

"You are brave, Mademoiselle, to kill one wolf and drag another, wounded, to your feet."

His voice was hardly more than a whisper. The sweat of agony stood out on his face.

"No. I'm not brave. I am terribly afraid," she said honestly. He heard the tremor in her voice as she made her confession, and smiled. She shuddered. The smile, the mocking words, out of pain-twisted lips, hurt her sharply. They made it all more fearsome, more horrible.

"Is your leg broken?" she asked presently.

"I think not. I believe it is only a very bad sprain." His voice was still weak and forced. He brushed his sleeve across his face. After the worst of the pain had passed, he asked her,

"What happens now?"

She pondered a while before she replied, "The only thing to do is for you to walk the best way you can, leaning on me, to the cabin. That's my

home. We lived there before you and the Indians drove us out," she concluded bitterly.

De Quindre looked down at her again searchingly, as he limped or hopped along, very slowly. He could take only a step or two at a time; because the pain in the injured ankle and leg, which had been cramped under him in the snowy pit for so long, caused him such agony that he had to stop every few minutes. He did not speak again until they reached the cabin. Becky lighted the candle she had brought and made a fire. She spread her furs on the floor by the fire and told him to rest there. He sank down, as she directed, on the furs and watched her silently put the possum on to cook.

"This is a dream," he muttered to himself in French. "It is impossible that this girl should be real."

She had just told him in her practical way that he ought to remain there until the swelling of his ankle went down, and that she would bring in the wolf meat for him the next morning.

"Can you mend your snowshoe with a piece of my rope?" she asked.

"Oh, yes; I thank you."

The food she offered him tasted very good to the weakened and hungry man. But hunger was not the only reason why De Quindre spoke little during the meal. His mind was absorbed by the miracle of Becky Landers. His glittering piercing gaze rarely left her face. An hour later, as he

patched his snowshoe, broken by his fall, under the glow of her candle, he said:

"In my childhood, Mademoiselle, one used to read to me and teach me good things. And I recall now a phrase: 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him.' But He who said that, Mademoiselle, ignored all worldly philosophy."

Becky looked at him, her brows drawn together in a puzzled frown. "You're not all bad inside. Only you don't seem real human. You make me think, somehow, of a wild animal."

He laughed; a low, pleased chuckle.

"Yet you do not shoot me."

"No. I'd feel ashamed to." Presently she said, "Do you know the redskins that came here from Kaskaskia and stole my brother, Rodney?"

"When was that?" he demanded, with keen interest. "I am going there. I do not try to find my Indians now; they will be in their towns. I go directly to the Illinois."

She told him about the raid and why she believed her brother was still alive.

"Somehow—I don't even guess how, yet—I'm going there to look for him, because losing Rod is just killing Mother," she said. But she did not mention Clark and his proposed expedition. Becky was only a girl, to be sure, but she had far too much sense to tell De Quindre that Clark and his Kentuckians were planning a raid on a British outpost. It was all right to save and feed a foe, but one didn't

tell him things which he could use against one's friends afterwards!

He was silent for a few moments, then he said:

"This is wild talk, Mademoiselle. You could not go to Kaskaskia. It would be impossible for you to remain alive on such a journey. Indians would capture you also and almost surely kill you. You have a brave heart as well as a kind one, but you must not make this so very foolish attempt. Perhaps, instead, I can help you. I have much gratitude to express. If you had delivered me to your men"—he made a gesture across his throat—"adieu Dagniaux De Quindre!"

"If you feel that way," she answered bluntly, "you should stay out of Kentucky with your Indians and not fight against us any more."

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled deprecatingly.

"Mademoiselle, that is impossible. I am a soldier. I do not expect you to understand. But your brother—that is another matter altogether. There, it may be that I can serve you. I will inquire and I will search for him. And when I find him I will put him under the protection of friends of mine till the war is over. In some way, if I find him, I will send news to you."

"Do you mean it?" she gasped, the tears starting.

"On my word of honor, Mademoiselle. As I said to you once before today, accept my word. You may put your whole trust in it without fear of betrayal."

In silence he watched the tears flow, which for a while she was unable to check. Apparently he knew none of the gentle sympathetic words which would have come so readily to another man's lips—Boone's or Kenton's, for instance—at the sight of a young girl's grief. When she had recovered herself, he said:

"Will you pardon me if I sleep now? I have not slept at all since I ran from your rifle at Maybrook. I dared not close my eyes for even five minutes in that pit, with hungry wolves nosing about the edge waiting for such a chance. That is the wilderness, and also that is life, as I have known it—the hidden pit, the wolf, starvation, blood, and death. Never before today, Mademoiselle, have I seen mercy in the wilderness. I am deeply puzzled by it."

In the early morning, Becky went out to the pit and brought in De Quindre's rifle. Then she made another and more arduous trip to drag the carcass of the wolf to the cabin.

"I guess you know how to skin it," she said; "if you don't, I'll do it before I start. You've got your gun and knife. Have you powder and balls enough for the trip to the Illinois?"

He laughed, amused, as he assured her that she need not trouble herself further on his account. As to his ankle, yes, it was much better since he had been able to bind it up tightly.

He stood in the doorway, with his injured limb

lifted from the floor, and watched her as she set off, her pack of furs on her back, her rifle over her arm. He watched till he could see her no more. Then he hopped back into the room, and, taking up his knife, began to skin the wolf.

"Little brother of the forest," he muttered with his quizzical smile, "something strange has been here—strange, and to us very dangerous. Something which can kill the wolf that is in a man perhaps as easily as it killed the wolf that was inside your pelt. *Belle petite Mademoiselle Mercy!*"

CHAPTER VIII

BECKY FINDS RED STAINS ON THE SNOW

IT was a different Becky who trudged homeward with her furs. Her heart was lifted again to its native peak of optimism. She felt every confidence in De Quindre's word. He would seek Rod, find him, and care for him until she arrived with Clark to fetch him. She was cheered, too, as to Boone's prospects of escape by the information that her Wolf was not going to the Ohio Indian towns but directly into the Illinois. Things were still bad, of course, but they had taken a slight turn for the better. It was a pity that she could not share her hopes with Jemmy who needed a little comforting so much. But she realized that her curious truce, or pact of friendship, with Captain De Quindre must never be divulged to a living soul. Even her good friend, Simon Kenton, might call her a traitor for it. At any rate, he would most certainly call her a fool; and that was a word Becky Landers could not endure when applied to herself!

The air was not only clear but very sharp, the temperature having fallen during the night which had been cold enough to put a thin crust of ice over the snow. The sun sparkled on this crust and sent

up diamond points of colored light, dazzling enough to make the traveler blink and see spots for some minutes after closing the eyes.

Becky narrowed her lids and looked down directly in front of her as much as possible to avoid those dancing prismatic points which seemed to keep the whole surface of the snow in shining motion. It was a strange winter for Kentucky, deep snow and sufficient chill to crust it. Nature might have seemed to have allied herself with the British and the Red Man to make those years of the War of Independence intolerable for the settlers in the Beloved Old Fields. But, in another way, she was helping them. She was surrounding them with a stripped forest and a stark white ground which provided no ambush for red warriors. Even the adventurous De Quindre, who knew about the powder and possibly also about the helpless condition of Boonesborough, would not make another effort that winter to marshal a red army for a raid on Kentucky. And the Indians would not come of their own accord.

On looking up presently to take a survey of the scene, merely for caution's sake, Becky sighted a deer. She knew from the way it was running that something had frightened it. It was crashing and stumbling through the crust which gave way at every thrust of the deer's small sharp hoofs and momentarily held its legs with the sharp icy edges. Snow like this made very bad going for deer, putting them practically at the mercy of the stalker.

Becky Finds Red Stains on Snow 87

"There's a wolf after that deer," said Becky.

She did not think the stalker was a man because the frontiersmen did not hunt deer in midwinter. At that season the meat was poor and the hide practically worthless. But such a snow as this gave the wolves the best chance they had during the whole year to kill deer. For the crust, which so impeded the deer's flight, did not yield to the lighter weight and padded paws of the wolf. In fact, the wolf slid along on the glazed surface at an increased speed.

Before many minutes had passed Becky saw a large wolf emerge from the leafless thicket and lope after the deer, which was trying to gain the bed of the creek where the snow was thinner and its chances of escape better.

"That's a big wolf. It isn't only the white ground which makes it look so big. I believe it's the big wolf Simon saw and couldn't get last fall," Becky said to herself. "I'm going to have a try for him. Anyway, he isn't going to get that poor deer if I can help it."

In this resolve Becky Landers was merely fulfilling one of the ideals of frontier chivalry. If a hunter shot a deer at this season he was rather looked down upon by others. Perhaps the fact that deer were poor then and also that the condition of the ground gave the hunter too much advantage had something to do with it. The chivalry of the chase went further than that, however. It was

customary for hunters to go to the rescue of a deer caught in the crusted drifts by killing the wolf which was blithely sliding over the ice to an easy meal.

"It's so terrified, poor thing. It will never get through the drift on the bank."

Evidently the wolf concurred in Becky's opinion, for it put on speed as it saw the deer floundering into the drift. Becky, who had every true American hunter's contempt for a wolf as the biggest coward in the wilderness, sprinted boldly towards them. When she got within safe range, she took aim, fired, and rolled the wolf over. However, it got up again, evidently not badly wounded, and continued after the deer which had plunged to a standstill in snow to its belly. Her second shot told better. The wolf dropped.

Becky hastened to the spot, intending to help the deer extricate itself by beating down the snow in front of it. In the new terror of her presence, the animal gathered all its forces and sprang clear of the drift, landing on the creek bottom.

"Well, you're safe for awhile anyway, poor thing," she said aloud.

She went over to the wolf to make sure that it was dead. It was. So, still having a new coat for Ruthie in mind, she skinned it.

"I think I'll follow the deer's example and go along the creek. It's shorter, and Mother will be worrying by now."

Becky Finds Red Stains on Snow 89

Becky had gone some distance farther when she saw a number of fox tracks and evidence that the makers of them had been scratching busily in the deep snow under the bank. She turned aside to find out what had interested them, and stopped suddenly, her heart in her mouth and even her lips turning white. She had come upon strands of black hair scattered about on the snow, and stains of blood.

Pulling herself together, she stooped and began an examination. It did not take her many minutes to discover that a white man's scalp, wet and bleeding, had been dropped here. The hair was unmistakably a white man's.

"Lots of white men have black hair like that. Lots of them." She repeated it aloud in trembling tones, trying to reassure herself; for, at that moment, it seemed to her that only one man in Kentucky had such hair—shoulder-length, dark and silky. That man was Daniel Boone.

She felt so weak from the horrible fear which had gripped her that she sank down on the snow. She could not bear to look for the body; yet she knew that she must. However terrible the certainty might prove, she could not evade it.

"It's over there where they've been digging so hard. These tracks are so recent that I shouldn't wonder if they were at it just now and got scared away when the deer jumped down. Or perhaps my shot sent them off."

She realized that the suspense was only increasing her bodily weakness. So she forced herself to go and look at the thing which the foxes had partially uncovered—the thigh, shoulder and arm of a man in a deerskin suit.

With her knife Becky dug away the snow until the dead face appeared.

“Oh, Jemmy, dear! It isn’t your father!” she exclaimed, as if poor Jemmy were there to hear her. Then, unable to control herself any longer, she drooped forward, as she knelt there, till her face was hidden in her arms on the snow and wept convulsively.

She had lain so for some time when she heard her name called in tones of alarm.

“Becky, gal!”

It was Simon, she knew, but she was helpless to move or answer. A moment more, and Kenton’s strong arms picked her up.

“Are yer hurt, my gal?” anxiously.

But, even as he spoke, Simon saw the body. Another quick glance took in the torn scalp and the fox signs.

“Becky, gal! Yer shouldn’t have dug it up yerself. It was too much fer yer. Why didn’t yer run on home an’ git me ter do it? It’s Tom Chester o’ St. Asaph’s.”

“Yes,” she sobbed. “Poor, poor Mrs. Chester! Oh, Simon, Kentucky is beautiful and I love it. But oh, it’s horrible too!”

Becky Finds Red Stains on Snow 91

"Yeh," was Simon's brief answer to that. "Yer shouldn't have dug it up yerself, gal," he repeated.

"I couldn't help it, Simon. I saw the bits of hair first. And, somehow, I couldn't think of a man who had hair like that—except Daniel Boone. And when I remembered poor Jemmy at home, hoping and fearing, and hoping—you know, Simon I couldn't go on. I had to know."

"Yeh. I see. Wal, it does look like Dan'l's hair, fer a fact. But it ain't, praise the Lord. Dan'l's ben took afore by redskins an' kep' his hair. An' I'm caountin' on him ter do it agin."

"I'll bet on it," said Charles Doty, one of the two men who accompanied him.

"Simon, for Jemmy's sake, let's not say anything about what we've found," Becky suggested. "There's no use to anybody in telling it in Maybrook. And there's no chance at all of sending word to St. Asaph's. Couldn't we just bury him and say nothing?"

"Yeh, I guess so. Think that's all right?" he asked his companions.

They nodded. Doty said he thought it would be a good idea if Kenton took Becky home and left him and his comrade, Anton Weiss, to do the last offices for the red men's victim.

"Guess yer got the right notion thar, too, Charlie," said Simon. "Becky's went through enough fer one day. We oughter thank God fer all o' Maybrook as well as fer Dan'l. I guess yer

kin figger like I kin jes' what it means ter find Tom Chester scalped within three miles o' Maybrook."

"I was wondering about that, Simon," Becky said. "What do you think about it?"

"Wal, I'd say they found out John Floyd had give 'em the slip over west some place. An' they knew he'd head fer Maybrook, it bein' the only station anywheres near. If they didn't catch him, he'd git the news ter Boonesborough, too. An' mebbe they know the walls ain't up an' plan ter come back. Mout be that; an', agin, it mout be that they wanted Floyd. Anyhow, they come back this way lookin' fer him, an' they got the notion o' goin' on daown the creek, like they done afore, an' attackin' Maybrook, when we was off guard an' feelin' sartain they'd gone back ter Ohio. They'd got their war dander up, anyhaow, an' they couldn't wait. So they killed an' scalped Tom Chester. It was night time an' the redskin that done it didn't notice he'd dropped the scalp. Thar's twenty dollars he won't collect from the Hair-Buyer. I guess killin' Chester kind o' contented 'em fer awhile an' put 'em off the notion o' raidin' us. Injuns is like that. They're changeable. Lucky fer Maybrook they changed jes' when they did!"

"Yes," Becky whispered. How close death had come that night while, within the fort, they had been congratulating themselves that it had passed and would not menace them again till winter ended!

Becky Finds Red Stains on Snow 93

"Wal, we're agreed, then eh? Not a word o' this in Maybrook?"

"Right," said the other men.

"Come along, gal. Did I tell yer we come lookin' fer yer coz yer Maw was gittin' scared? Let's make tracks fer home. Nice big wolf pelt yer got thar."

So, talking casually of anything but the tragic figure in the snow, Simon and Becky went on home.

CHAPTER IX

SCHOOL IN MAYBROOK

THE next morning while the Landers household was breakfasting by candlelight there was a knock on the door.

"Oh, hullo, Ruben. Come in," Becky said heartily, as she saw a tall ungainly young man standing outside. She held the door wide for him. "Mother," she added, "it's snowing again and blowing, too."

"Good-morning, Reuben," Mrs. Landers greeted the young man with a kindly smile.

"Good-morning, Ma'am—Becky—Miss Jemmy—an' Ted an' Ruthie." Reuben Page stood somewhat bashfully twirling his fur cap between his hands.

"Goo-morning, Roobing," Ruthie piped up. "Sit down and had some becfas'." Ruthie, for some unexplained cause, always used the past tense of the verb "to have." Generously, she extended to him a dripping spoonful of corn-meal mush. "Good," she informed him invitingly.

"Guess so, Ruthie," he smiled, "but I've had mine."

"Ruthie still talks baby talk," Jemmy commented, smiling.

"Yes. Maybe she always will," Becky answered. "Because we always talk it to her. And everybody else does, too. She's the youngest child in Maybrook and nobody wants her to grow up. In fact, they all treat her more like a doll than a baby."

"She doesn't look quite so much like a doll this morning with those patches of mush on her cheeks and her chin," Mrs. Landers remarked.

"Good!" Ruthie repeated ecstatically, digging into her bowl again.

"What can we do for you this morning, Reuben?" Mrs. Landers asked.

"Wal, Ma'am, it's a right mean day outdoors. An' seein' as the youngsters can't play around, I was thinkin' mebbe yer'd give us some schoolin'. It would kind o' pass the day."

"Of course, I will, if you and the children want me to. When do you want to begin? Becky and I still have a little work to do," Mrs. Landers said pleasantly.

"Wal, Ma'am, I thought round nine o'clock mebbe. The little ones'll have got their faces wiped off by then, an' the big ones'll have done their chores. Yes, Ma'am, I'd say round nine, if that's agreeable."

"Perfectly agreeable, Reuben." She smiled and nodded to him as he left.

"Is that big man coming to school?" Jemmy asked.

"Yes, indeed. And there will be a few other grown men, too—Jasper Hix and Charles Doty and Anton Weiss. Poor things! They never had a chance to go to school when they were younger, and they are so eager now to learn to read and write. Reuben has a mother in Carolina and he longs to be able to write a letter to her. And each of the others has some one, a sister or brother or friend he remembers with affection, to whom he wants to send news of himself. Poor things. I feel so sorry for them."

"I suppose you write their letters for them," Jemmy said. "But, of course, that isn't exactly the same thing."

"Yes, I write them. Sometimes Becky does. Not lately, of course."

"No," Becky added, "since the Indians got so bad no traders have come to Kentucky. So there's been no way of sending out letters."

"I suppose if those big men are coming to school, I needn't be ashamed because I can hardly read at all or write," Jemmy said.

"No, dear. You mustn't feel ashamed. You're a frontier child, you know, and frontier children can do without slates and copy books. What they have to know how to handle are a rifle and a tomahawk."

Becky giggled at that.

"Mother dearest, they certainly did not teach you how to handle those frontier toys at the elegant young ladies' seminary you attended at our age."

"Your Mother was a real girl, Becky," Jemmy said. "*We aren't.*"

"As to big men coming to school, Jemmy," Becky went on. "You just wait. Before school is over today, Kenton and most of the others will be in here sitting humbly at Mrs. Pauline Landers' little moccasins."

"Becky!" Mrs. Landers laughed. "You are so absurd! You see, Jemmy, I read to them from my books—the Bible and Shakespeare's plays and Milton's poems and some journals and books of travel, such as *An American in Paris* and *Diary of a Young Colonial Lady*, and *A Pilgrim in the Holy Land*. I have only a few books——"

"I like *Paris Los'*," Ruthie's high treble interrupted. Becky giggled.

"Ruthie always mixes the names of *Paradise Lost* and the *American in Paris*. But Milton is her favorite. I wonder why? Of course, she doesn't understand a word of it."

"Yes! I do! I do! Bad Becky!" Ruthie, her pride cut to the quick, wailed her protest. The big tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Darling!" Becky caught her up. "Did I hurt your feelings? Well, there, there, now; don't cry. Tell Becky what you know about *Paris Los'*. Why do you like it so much, dear?"

"Devil got trun down," Ruthie explained between sobs. "And he fell—and he fell—down and down—in the caves and all night."

"Caves and all night?" Becky queried. "Can you make out what she means, Mother?"

"Yes!" Ruthie was very positive about it.

"I wonder if she means 'chaos and old night?'" said her mother.

"Yes. Caves and all night," Ruthie reiterated triumphantly. Then, to leave nothing undone that might show the extent of her learning, she recited the alphabet.

"What a scholar we have in our family!" Becky mocked, affectionately.

"And when he fell he los' his Paris." Apparently Ruthie had not yet finished with the subject.

"What's that?" Ted demanded, beginning to take an interest.

"He fell and he *fell* so *far* he los' his shirt and his leggings and his cap and his mocc'sins"—Ruthie took a breath and went on; "and he los' his rifle and his tomykaw' and his s'ot pouts——"

"S'ot pouts? Oh, shot pouch, of course!" Jemmy said.

"Aw!" Ted interrupted. "How'd you know he lost them?"

"Coz in the pitcher in the book he didn't had them. He didn't had nothing on but a long, *long* tail!"

"How d'you know he ever had them?" Ted insisted.

"Coz he los' them! And he los' his Paris, too."

"What *is* his Paris, Ruthie?" Jemmy asked.

But now Ruthie was really offended, not grieved but offended. She scrambled down from Becky's lap, turned on the group a flash of bright indignant blue and pouted her rosy mouth like a rosebud asking to be plucked.

"*He los' it!*" she said in her most definite manner and retired with great dignity to the other room.

"Aw! everything has got to be the way Ruthie wants it or she gets mad," Ted said scornfully.

"Everybody is that way, pretty much," Jemmy remarked.

"Except Mother," said Becky. "Run along, Ted, and bring in some more wood. This school needs a lot of wood," she added, with her characteristic giggle. "Sometimes we use slabs of wood to write on and sometimes bits of white birch bark. Simon helped Reuben make a dozen planed pieces of wood and lots of pens from turkey quills. We use dye for ink. The little paper we have left is being kept to write letters on. There's no knowing when any more will be brought in."

"Come along, Ruthie, and help me fetch the wood," Ted called. Ruthie, proud and happy because her services were required, emerged full of smiles. Ted wrapped her in her furs, put on her mittens, and led her, prancing, out to the yard.

All signs of breakfast had been cleared away and a huge fire was blazing and crackling cheerily when the scholars arrived. They came in a body; and a curiously assorted group they looked as they squatted in a semicircle on the floor. Besides the three men there were the Brown cousins, both boys of Ted's age or a year older, David and Jesse Morton aged twelve and thirteen, and their sisters, Mary and Martha, who owned to eight and ten years, and their cousins, Cato and Beulah Hix, who were fourteen and fifteen years old. There were two more boys, not related to each other nor to any of the other pupils, Jim Carson and Tom Pim. Both were sixteen, but there all resemblance ceased. Jim Carson was tall and manly, a good scout, hunter and fighter. Tom Pim was slender and almost girlish in appearance, with brown curls and brown eyes like Becky's. In fact, he was often twitted about his likeness to Becky. He was brave, but he was no good for a man's work in Kentucky. His mind was like that of a nice and not overly intelligent child of Ted's age. Something had happened to it the day when Tom Pim, then six years old, had lain in a cask, where his mother had hastily thrust him in the desperate hope of saving his life, and had seen his father, his mother and his mother's sister butchered in the cabin by Indians. If any one mentioned that massacre even now, Tom would turn ghastly white and fall into a silence which he would not break for days. Kenton had come on

the partially burned cabin and, in poking about in it, had discovered Tom in the barrel, half starved and in a semi-comatose state from which he had not emerged for many days. In a sense, poor Tom had never emerged from it; for, if he possessed the mind of the average boy of his years, it was asleep in him. Kenton had brought him to Maybrook; so, in a way, he belonged to Simon. But every one was kind to him; even those cruder ones, such as Kenton himself, who teased him about his being "almost a gal." Tom did not succeed much better with the usual three R's than he did with the fourth R of the frontier, i.e., the rifle. He had a talent for music, though, which made him welcome everywhere. He invented little simple melodies of his own and played them with a piercing sweetness on willow pipes which he made. He was never to be found without his woodland flute in his pouch.

Even Ruthie knew the alphabet, and the rest of Mrs. Landers' pupils were now beyond that stage. They were learning to know words by trying to read aloud a passage from one of her books. They read the same passage by turns, working out the pronunciation for themselves by the simple rules she had given them.

In accordance with her custom, Mrs. Landers opened school with the Lord's Prayer and then read aloud from the Bible. Chiefly with the thought of Jemmy's anxiety, and the desire to strengthen and comfort her, she chose today that glorious paean

of divine protection, the Ninety-first Psalm. Her beautifully modulated voice deepened with reverent conviction as she read the promises of safety: "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways"—"There shall no evil befall thee"—"A thousand shall fall at thy side . . . it shall not come nigh thee."

When she had finished there was silence for some moments; then Reuben said:

"That's a good piece fer frontiersmen."

Jemmy watched where Mrs. Landers put the marker in the Bible before she closed it and laid it aside.

"What shall we read today?" Mrs. Landers asked.

Martha said she wanted the trial scene from the "Merchant of Venus."

"Venice, dear; not Venus," the teacher gently corrected her pronunciation.

"Yes, M'is Landers. It's that piece about mercy I want to read. I almost done it right last time."

"Did it; not done it."

"Yes, M'is Landers."

"Mercy," Becky repeated involuntarily, her eyes lighting suddenly with a memory.

"Yeh. Mercy's a queer word in Kaintuck," Anton Weiss opined.

"Mercy in the wilderness." Becky felt a strange thrill of exaltation as she echoed De Quindre's words. Perhaps it was the effect of the psalm which

her mother had just read, but suddenly there was a glow upon that experience of hers with De Quindre which she had not seen before. *He* had found mercy in the wilderness. Then why should not Rod find it, too, and Daniel Boone?

"I like the way that piece starts," Martha was saying. "I remember some of it." While Mrs. Landers was finding the place, Martha began to recite:

'The quality of mercy is not strained.
It droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven,
On the place under it'—

"No; I guess I forgot somethin'."

"It's 'gentle *rain* from heaven' " said Becky, who had been brought up on Shakespeare.

"Yes, dear. And, in any case, it wouldn't be 'gentle *jew* from heaven,' " Mrs. Landers supplemented, "but dew. Dew is spelled with a d and not a j. And the next line is 'upon the place beneath.' "

"Yes, M'is Landers. I recollect now."

Taking the book Martha went slowly and carefully through Portia's plea to the adamant Shylock, rather in the manner of one stepping on glass. It took some time, because of the numerous corrections of her slovenly speech. Then, one after another, the others struggled with it.

"That's a real purty piece," said Kenton, who had slipped in quietly during the reading. He disposed his huge bulk on the floor close to the fire.

"Seems like yer got a bad cold, Charlie. Catch it yesterday? Sounds like that cough yer had fer so long is kind o' wuss lately."

"I reckon so. Kind o' feverish, too," Doty answered. A few minutes later, he said something about "mending a window" and went out.

"I hope Mr. Doty isn't feeling seriously ill," Mrs. Landers said.

"Oh, I reckon not," Simon replied. "I'll fix him up somethin' hot. No man gits seriously ill in Kaintuck from anythin' but redskins. That's the only disease we ever dies of."

"Tom, you haven't read yet?" Becky said to Tom Pim.

"What! Cyan't yer read like that thar gal, Becky?" Simon joked at him.

Tom turned his candid, gentle face toward Kenton.

"Yer can't fuss me by callin' me a gal an' sayin' I'm like Becky. Coz that isn't callin' me a gal, at all. Coz I've heard yer say lots of times that Becky's a boy." He joined triumphantly in the general laughter.

"Do you want to read, Tom?" Mrs. Landers asked.

"I don't have to, Ma'am. Coz after a piece has been read a few times I can say it right off. It kind of goes in my head an' sticks. Only I don't hear it jes' like they read it."

"What do you mean?" Jemmy looked puzzled.

"Well, they read it like it was jes' talkin'. But the way I hear it, it's got a kind of tune to it." He recited it slowly, giving every line its proper rhythm and metre as blank verse. "I hear it that way—kind of marchin', like somebody was beatin' a drum fer it."

"You recite it quite beautifully," Mrs. Landers said, her eyes kindling. It always made her happy to bring forth some sign of intelligence from Tom Pim.

"Remember that little piece yer read me last week about the tree? I made a tune fer it." He pulled his willow pipe out of his pouch, looked it over and blew at the holes in it to clear it of any fleck of alien substance which might have got into it.

"What tree, dear?"

Tom, rocking his body slowly to the measure of the lines, intoned the verse sung by Amiens in "As You Like It."

" 'Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.'

I like that piece. I made a tune fer it." he repeated.

"Play it for us, Tom," Becky urged.

Tom never needed any coaxing to play. He set his flute to his lips. In the ecstasy which the shrilly sweet yet woody-fibred sounds gave him, his placid eyes opened wider and shone as if a ray of sun had touched them. He could not play the full scale on his instrument. It yielded perhaps no more than four tones. It was his arrangement of these which was interesting. They combined in a melody that suggested a wild bird or—had the little group of listeners known it—some of the plaintive, monotonous but poignantly appealing melodies composed by the red men under the influence of those same sounds of Nature—bird calls, brooks, wind—which had stirred the slumbering soul of Tom Pim and made it sing.

"I like that very much indeed, Tom," Mrs. Landers told him. He answered her silently with his grateful shining smile, and began to play again.

The pupils drifted out presently to do their parts at home in preparing the mid-day meal. As Mrs. Landers rose to set the pot over the flames, Jemmy touched her arm. She had the Bible in her hand.

"Show me where it says 'Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him,' please," she whispered. Silently, Mrs. Landers put her finger on the verse.

"You know," Jemmy said, still speaking in an undertone, "Dad does love God. He says God

raised him up just for this work—to open the wilderness for others.”

“Then, dear, be sure that God will take care of His workman.”

Mrs. Landers and Becky went quietly about their tasks. Even Ted whose duty it was to watch the flat bread—Indian bread—which his mother presently put in the ashes to bake, did not want to talk. And Ruthie nestled beside him silently. Kenton’s leonine head, drooped between his huge shoulders, bulked out of the shadows into the gleam of the fire. Jemmy’s lips moved as she slowly traced each word of the fine print with her finger. The thin shrill sweetness of Tom’s flute lifted out of the shadowed corner behind Kenton, where he had crept to be out of the way.

CHAPTER X

CHARLIE DOTY'S TESTIMONIAL TO THE FRONTIER

A FEW days after Jemmy Boone had attended her first school, the mother of Cato and Beulah Hix came in.

"M'is Landers," she said, seating herself by the fire, "I jes' ben ter see Charlie Doty."

"I hope he is feeling better today," Mrs. Landers said. "I was unhappy about him, last evening. I went in to take him some soup and I thought him looking very ill."

"He's wuss. A lot wuss."

Mrs. Landers' busy knitting needles, employed in making red socks for Ruthie, stopped. Her eyes darkened with consternation.

"Worse? How?"

"Wal, yer know how every once in awhile Charlie Doty would cough? He's ben goin' on that way 'most a year. He never took much notice an' nobody else did. But ever sence fall he's ben coughin' wuss. He told Simon yesterday how he never liked ter say nothin' about the way he felt; coz it made him kind o' shamed, him bein' a full-grown man an' every man bein' needed so bad in Maybrook."

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"He is brave and unselfish. I wish I had known," Mrs. Landers said feelingly.

"I guess that's jes' your ladylike way o' sayin' Charlie Doty's a Kaintucky man. Mebbe some place back East, t'other side o' the mountains, men has a chance ter worry about themselves, when they git sick. But that time ain't come in Kaintucky. Don't look as if it ever would."

"What does Mr. Kenton say about it?"

"Simon says it looks like Charlie Doty's got consumption. Gallopin' consumption, some folks calls it."

"Oh, no! Oh, I do hope it's not that! Why does Mr. Kenton think so?"

Mrs. Hix drew her tall raw-boned figure up straighter and rested her large chapped and work-lined hands, which she had been warming at the blaze, one on each knee.

"Charlie's father an' brother died o' it back East. He told Simon t'other day. He said he kind o' expected it when that cough come, an' pains in his chest. Seems that was one reason why he wanted ter larn ter write. So he could write a letter himself ter somebody he thinks a heap of afore he died."

"I wish I had known!"

"Tell the truth I thought he was goin' to go fer sure little afore mornin' last night. I was sittin' up with him."

"Oh, Mrs. Hix, why didn't you call me? Nobody has told me that he was so ill as that."

"M'is Morton's ben helpin'. I told Becky about it but I said she better not tell yer jes' yit. Ye're awful willin', M'is Landers. But yer ain't as strong as us, an' I 'lowed as yer had enough ter do, lookin' after yer two young uns an' tryin' ter keep poor Jemmy cheered up. An' not havin' no man in the family—'ceptin' Becky."

"Oh, but that shouldn't make any difference," Mrs. Landers protested. "I want to do my share."

"Yeh, I know. It shouldn't make no difference. But it does. Lord knows this life is hard enough on the wives that has good husbands ter take keer on 'em. But it's a lot harder on the widders."

"You never let me feel that, Mrs. Hix. I am cared for here as if I were the sister of every woman and every man in Maybrook. I am very grateful for it."

"Wal, we all set a powerful lot o' store by yer, M'is Landers. Yer was raised different from us. Ye're right genteel. An' I reckon if yer wanted ter tell about it, yer could say yer come o' grand folks back thar in Virginny. Yer never roughed it till yer come ter Kaintucky."

"No. I had no training for this life."

"I reckon not. But yer act jes' like one o' us. Never put on no airs. Don't think yerself better'n M'is Morton an' me an' the Brown women. An'

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we 'preciate it. It's a real genuwine pleasure ter look up ter somebody that ain't expectin' it."

Mrs. Landers flushed slightly under her neighbor's frank praise. Mrs. Hix went on.

"So I said ter M'is Morton last night—I said—'Let's leave M'is Landers out o' this. Mebbe Charlie'll take a turn for the better in the mornin'. An', if he's wuss, an' it looks like he might die right soon, it'll be time ter tell her then.' So I come ter tell yer."

"You mean you think he is dying?" Mrs. Landers rose swiftly, putting her knitting on the table.

"Yeh. Simon, too; he thinks Charlie won't last mebbe over ternight or termorrer. Jes' a question o' hours, M'is Landers."

"I'm going over there now," Mrs. Landers said. There were tears in her eyes.

"Yeh. I come ter git yer." Mrs. Hix stood up and wrapped her shawl about her. As she watched Mrs. Landers hastily making ready to accompany her, she said: "If yer got any o' that paper left like yer write letters on, better take a piece. Charlie's got no paper but he's got his pens an' some ink he made out o' gunpowder."

"I'll take it. But perhaps he is too ill now to think of letters. Dear Mrs. Hix, you *ought* to have called me before."

"No need o' it. He can't talk much at a time an' his voice is all gone ter a whisper. Jes' kind o' hollow an' husky. But he can say what he wants. He

asked me ter git yer ter come an' ter bring some paper, if yer had some left."

"Is there nothing I can take him? Perhaps a shawl to put over him?" Mrs. Landers asked, loath to go without something which would add comfort to the sick man's last hours.

"No. He's got M'is Brown's shawl. An' M'is Morton's lent him her crazy quilt she brought from Rutherford. Her Maw made it fer her when she was married. She sets a heap o' store by it. I reckon a man would have ter be dyin' afore M'is Morton would lend him the loan o' her Maw's crazy quilt. Not that she warn't right willin' ter offer it ter Charlie. But that shows yer he ain't long fer this world."

Mrs. Hix did not intend her comments on the loan of the crazy quilt to be humorous. Nor did Mrs. Landers feel tempted to smile at them. Her thoughts were too full of the tragedy of poor Charles Doty, and, besides, she knew the sentiment of almost reverent pride the frontier folk attached to their one or two objects, at most, which linked their new life with the old. It was a sentiment which clung the more intensely because the whole will of the frontier opposed it. The wilderness was a breaker of ties.

"I see Jemmy over there with the children. I thought Becky was with her," Mrs. Landers said. "I want to tell her to see about supper. I shall stay with poor Mr. Doty. I wonder where Becky is?"

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"She's with Charlie. M'is Morton had ter go home fer a spell. She'll be back. Becky said she'd write the letter. But Charlie said he wanted her Maw ter come."

As they reached the door Mrs. Hix said, rather as if she were thinking aloud than speaking to any one:

"It's so queer, somehow, I can't take it in—a man dyin' peaceable from sickness in Kaintucky."

Becky was holding a mug of cold water to the burning lips of the sick man when her mother and Mrs. Hix came in. She had been sitting on a wooden stool close to the bed. It was the only seat in the room. She moved away now to let her mother have it.

Mrs. Landers touched Doty's hand gently. His sunken eyes looked up at her gratefully.

"Did you want me to write a letter for you? Hadn't you better wait till you're stronger?" she asked.

"I like fer yer ter speak ter me that way. Yer voice sounds like when yer speak ter Ruthie," he whispered. "Hope Ruthie's well," he added presently.

"Yes. But you shouldn't talk——"

"Ain't never goin' ter be no stronger," he interrupted. "Knowed that sence that cough come on me. My ink an' pens is on the table."

Becky moved noiselessly across the room and returned with a cup, in which there was the mixture of

black powder and water that served for ink, and a pen. Next she brought the wooden slab, which had been Doty's slate, and laid it on her mother's lap as a support for the sheet of paper.

"Want ter write ter Dave——"

Mrs. Landers wrote down the name: David Sothern, Maple Creek, Holston Valley. She had written several letters for Charles Doty to this friend of his boyhood. Dave, apparently, was the nearest thing to a relative that Doty possessed. Becky, kneeling beside Mrs. Landers, held the ink cup.

"Dear Dave," Mrs. Landers prompted.

"Wrote that already? Yer do it so quick. Wonder if I'd ever have got so I could do it that quick an' easy?" Doty whispered.

"What shall I tell him?" she asked.

"Dear Dave—sorry ter tell yer this'll be about the last letter from me. I ain't got more'n a short while ter live, account o' that coughin' sickness Paw an' Brother Bill died of." A fit of coughing stopped him and left him too weak for some time to make the effort to go on. Then he began to dictate again more faintly. "M'is Landers, she's writin' this letter fer me. If I'd have lived a year longer, mebbe I'd have ben fixed up with an eddication so I could write it myself. I know yer, Dave, an' I know yer ter be the same good friend an' true what yer always was. An' I know yer ain't never writ me ter answer my letters, coz yer can't write no more'n I

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can. An' yer didn't think ter get somebody like M'is Landers ter write 'em. I guess thar ain't nobody like her in Maple Creek."

Doty's sentences were broken by frequent pauses. Mrs. Landers had to lean close to catch all the words for, at times, his lips moved with scarcely a sound. She no longer urged him to be quiet and rest, though, because she divined that this last letter was, for some reason or other, of far more importance to him than a few more hours of life. He had something to tell Dave which he felt was vital. He went on again.

"Me bein' weak an' near the end, I can't write a long letter this time. I want ter say, thar ain't enough men in Maybrook, an' me goin' this way takes away one gun. I'd like fer yer ter come as soon as yer can, coz a good man is needed an' yer'll find the folks here fust class. I wouldn't tell every man, riff-raff an' all, ter come, but I know yer Dave, fer a good man an' a sure shot. Dave, I sure hate ter drop my gun, knowin' thar's no man ter pick it up."

It seemed to Becky, kneeling there with misted eyes, that he would never break the long pause that followed. But, at last, she heard his low whisper.

"An' I want ter say, too, Dave, don't let nobody talk agin' Kaintuck an' put yer off comin'. O' course thar's some things that's awkward. Like Injuns. But yer was raised fightin' Injuns, an' never minded 'em pertikler. But Kaintuck is grand fer huntin',

an' it ain't too crowded with folks, like the Holston. Thar's fresh air all round. Kaintuck's a right beautiful country an' makes a man feel like he was wuth a heap jes' ter be in it. I'm right glad I lived in Kaintuck, an' I'm right glad I'll be buried in it. Coz it's the country fer real men. Yer don't need my gun coz yer got yer own. But, Dave, it's here waitin' fer yer, jes' the same. Kaintuck's all right. An' I oughter know. Wal, Dave, I got ter close now. So this'll be about all till next time. From your old friend, Charlie Doty. M'is Landers."

"Yes, dear boy." She looked at him dimly through a blur of tears.

"I reckon I oughtn't ter say 'till next time' when I'm dyin'. But I always said it afore, an' it seems kind o' onperlite to leave it off. Dave thinks a heap o' me. An' I don't want ter break it ter him too sudden, like."

"It is all right, Mr. Doty," she replied, with tremulous lips. Becky put the pen and ink and the letter on the table with the wooden slate which poor Charlie Doty would never use again. Then she crouched down on the floor again beside her mother.

"It's real kind in Charlie ter be thinkin' about us needin' a man," said Mrs. Hix. She made a gesture to prevent Mrs. Landers from rising to give her the stool.

"Standin' don't tire me none," she said.

Kenton came in some time later and leaned over

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Doty. He spoke, but without receiving word or sign in answer.

"Jes' breathin'. That's all," he said. "Poor Charlie."

"He's been troubling more about us, about how short of men Maybrook is, than about what is happening to him," Becky said. She began to sob quietly with her face against her mother's knee. In response to a whisper from Mrs. Landers she said: "I can't go away, Mother. Jemmy will get supper for herself and Ted and Ruthie. I just can't go away." And Mrs. Landers did not urge her.

By and by the other women of the settlement came in and stood looking down at the motionless figure on the bed. They were joined by Anton, Reuben, Al Hix and his young brother, Jasper. A little before midnight Kenton told them that Charles Doty was dead. He lifted Becky up from the floor.

"Come on, gal. Come, M'is Landers. Ain't nothin' more yer kin do fer Charlie. He don't need none o' us naow. I'm goin' ter take yer both home." To the other women he said, "I'm comin' right back."

Becky cried herself to sleep, as quietly as she could so that Jemmy should not hear. In the morning Mrs. Hix came in.

"Here's Charlie's letter, M'is Landers. I brought it over so it wouldn't git lost. I reckon Charlie wouldn't mind if yer made a copy of it, so we could keep it? Us women was talkin' about it

when we was sittin' up with the body. We jes' left ter git the breakfast."

"You stayed all night? You must be tired. But I think I understand. You wanted to show that respect."

"We took turns settin' on the stool. I ain't tired, pertikler." Mrs. Hix watched Mrs. Landers fold the letter and place it in the Bible for safe-keeping. Then she turned away and stood silent for a time staring into the fire. "Yeh; we wanted ter show respect fer Charlie," she said at last. "But 'twarn't only that. When Simon an' Anton got him laid out, he looked so handsome, M'is Landers, though nobody ever thought about it, when he was livin'. But—wal—M'is Morton an' M'is Brown an' me, we seen a lot o' men dead sence we fust come ter Kaintucky—an' afore that on the Holston an' the Yadkin. But specially in Kaintucky. An' we never seen one look like Charlie Doty." Her voice lowered in tones that had a wistful and awed quality. "Dead, thar, on his bed, M'is Landers, without a mark o' tomahawk nor scalpin' knife on him—jes' white an' perfec'! We 'lowed it was the most beautiful sight we ever seen in Kaintucky. An', somehow, we couldn't go an' leave him. We kep' the candles burnin' all night jes' ter look at him."

A little shudder ran through Mrs. Landers' slender frame. She leaned hard against the table, her face whitening with memories, as Mrs. Hix went on.

"Yer didn't see yer husband die that way. Nor

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me my brother Tom. The Good Book says somewhere that death's the *last* enemy that'll be destroyed. So, bein' the last, it won't happen fer a long time, coz o' all the evil that's got ter be destroyed afore. But lookin' at Charlie seemed somehow like a kind o' promise that the day'll come in Kaintucky when death'll be peaceable. An' women can jes' only *grieve* alongside o' their dead men—an' not shake cold with horrors."

Becky, listening, seemed to see again the scalped body of Tom Chester in the snow, with fox tracks about it. Involuntarily she covered her eyes with her hands.

"Yet, in that letter, he showed how he loved Kentucky," she said, presently, "even if its hardships had brought the sickness on him sooner than if he'd lived back East. He said the best thing he could think of, to show how he felt about it, when he said it was the country for real men."

"Yeh." Mrs. Hix came out of her brief reverie and moved towards the door. "A country fer real men. Queer thing about it is that real men can't go no place, not even Kaintucky, ter stay without takin' along women an' raisin' young uns. The more *real* they are, the more they got ter have homes round 'em. But I guess thar ain't *no* country ben made yit fer *women*. Wal—I'll say good-mornin'. They're goin' ter bury him arter dinner." She went out.

"I wish you'd read the letter to us, Mother,"

Becky said. "I need something to make me feel brave again. I guess we all do. And I don't know anything better than Charlie's letter."

"Yes," her mother said, taking up the letter and unfolding it; "brave and unselfish—thinking of others first."

Slowly and reverently she read aloud to the two girls, Jemmy and Becky, the dying man's testimonial to the Frontier.

CHAPTER XI

SIMON CHASES OUT THE GLOOMS

KENTON came one morning and called Becky out.

"Listen, gal," he said, "we got ter do somethin' ter cheer up Maybrook. Thar's a gloom settled on 'em all sence Doty died. Nothin' much ter do naow but set an' talk, accaount o' the snow. An' they're gittin' gloomier every day."

Becky nodded.

"Yes. First Mr. Boone and those thirty men taken prisoners and perhaps all murdered by now; then poor Mr. Doty dying——" She stopped, and controlled the threatening quiver of her lip. "It's—it's—got hold of me too, Simon. I *try* to talk and even joke in the house, but I can hardly get an answer; except from Ted and Ruthie. Jemmy's face looks like snow. And mother is in one of her worst silent brooding spells about father and Rod. She hasn't been as bad as that for, oh, ever so long. It isn't only what has happened, but some things Mrs. Hix said the next morning, which has made them both like this—set them off brooding."

"Wal, it's the same in every cabin in Maybrook. Cyant hardly git a word aout'n 'em. It won't do,

Becky. We got ter stop 'em from thinkin' an' git 'em right smart busy at somethin'. They ain't thinkin', yer understand, so much as philosophizin'. An' that's plum dangerous on the frontier. So long as folks is thinkin' *practical*, it's good fer 'em. Exercisin' yer mind practical is like trainin' yer eye ter shoot, or limberin' yer muscles fer the trail. But that thar raound-abaout philosophizin' is—*skunks!*"

Becky laughed.

"Well, what shall we do?"

"Plenty," with grim promptness. "I'm orderin' every man an' boy that's got a gun—an' that means Becky Landers, too—ter bring 'em ter the smithy fer overhaulin'. Goin' ter start 'em meltin' lead fer bullets. An' then we'll have a match—a regular Shootin' Bee. I'm the one that's goin' ter set up the targets an' give the good marks; an' the punishments too—if they miss anythin' I tell 'em ter hit."

"Don't forget you've got a very strong arm, Simon. Be careful you don't lame any one," Becky giggled.

"I ain't goin' ter *lame* 'em. I'm goin' ter *lam* 'em. The punishments'll be good marks, too, good marks with the hickory. One way an' another I aim ter stir up their blood an' git the gloom aout'n them. It's what every commander o' a small post like this has got ter look aout fer. Cyan't let 'em git the glooms. First thing yer know some one goes crazy fer keeps. An' the rest on 'em is so slack they cyan't

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shoot, nor nothin'! The glooms'll make a man miss a bar at five paces."

"Simon," Becky teased, "it's a poor hunter that'll let a bear get within five paces of him. And it's a poorer bear that'll get within five paces of a rifle. I don't recognize the hunting country you're describing. Where did you find it?"

Simon shook his finger at her.

"Don't yer sass me! I'll take no sass from a gal, Rebecca Ann Landers. Jes' fer that I'll lam yer wusst o' the lot if yer miss one shot! I'm the man that larned yer ter shoot, an' I ain't goin' ter be shamed. Go along naouw, yer impident young un, an' git yer gun."

Giggling, Becky started for the cabin. Simon called to her and she stopped.

"Becky, git Jemmy's back up by tellin' her Simon Kenton don't 'laow as haow any o' that Boone aout-fit can shoot. I mean the gals. Soon as she hears *that*, she'll git so busy makin' a shootin' record that, when she quits, she'll be thinkin' o' her Dad what larned her. An' she'll be dead sartain inside her that the best marksman an' scaout in Kaintuck ain't lost his scalplock. *She'll be dead sartain Dan'l Boone's comin' back.* A rifle's great medicine, Becky. I don't know anythin' that'll take the glooms aout, an' put horse sense inter, a man quicker—no matter which end on it he stands at! Though I always preferred the trigger end, myself." He

chuckled and moved briskly off on his important work of getting "the glooms" out of Maybrook.

"Simon is wonderful!" Becky exclaimed, entering the cabin with her old rush of jubilant energy. Her mother and Jemmy lifted their heads from their weaving, but the look in their eyes was dull and absent.

"What's he done?" Ted asked, without the eagerness with which he usually answered his sister's enthusiasm.

"He is having a Shooting Bee today. He says all Maybrook has gone slack with the glooms. Yes, I may as well tell you, Simon doesn't admire us any too much! He sees us forgetting how necessary it is to keep up our own spirits and everybody else's; and just giving way and being melancholy and selfish. And he's plum disgusted with us."

"Oh——" A pained expression crossed Mrs. Landers' face.

"Yes, Mother. You and I and Jemmy have been as bad as the rest. Simon won't get after *you*. But Jemmy and I are going to catch it hot at that Shooting Bee."

"I don't feel like shooting today," Jemmy said, listlessly. "I guess I won't do any."

Knowing Simon, Becky said, within herself, "Guess again!" Aloud, she said nonchalantly, "Oh, you need only take a few shots, Jemmy, just to show us your good will. Simon doesn't expect *you* to shoot."

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"Well—I don't want to be treated like a visitor or anything like that," Jemmy said. "I hope Simon doesn't think I do."

"No-o, Jemmy," Becky rather drawled the negative and looked a little awkward as if she knew something she could not say bluntly but must find a very tactful way to express. Jemmy's eyes lifted now with a more alert look in them.

"Why, Becky," she said, "the way you say it—your tone and all—sort of hints that—well, I can't guess, but *something*. What *did* Simon say?"

"Oh—well—he just thought you wouldn't care much about trying to—I mean, about shooting in Maybrook."

"Shooting in Maybrook? Trying to?" Jemmy repeated, staring at Becky as if she could hardly credit her ears. "Becky Landers! If it wasn't just too foolish, I'd almost think you meant that Simon Kenton's got a notion I *can't* shoot!"

"Now, Jemmy. It only shows how fond of you Simon is, that he doesn't want to force you into a competition——" That was as far as Becky got. Jemmy jumped up.

"Well! *Of all things!*" she gasped.

"Now, now, dear! Whatever Mr. Kenton suggests is only meant kindly," Mrs. Landers said soothingly. At least, she *intended* it to be soothing.

Jemmy's eyes flashed blue lightning from under her long black lashes.

"Mrs. Landers," she said, as politely as she

could, "*you mean well!* I love you and I respect you, Mrs. Landers. But you don't understand rifles nor folks, like us, that are born knowing how to use them. Simon Kenton has insulted me! That's what I think of his kindness. Kindness!" she repeated in a blaze of fury. "I'll show him! Why, Mrs. Landers, when my Dad comes back, if he heard I'd let Simon Kenton or anybody in Kentucky say Daniel Boone's girl couldn't shoot—why—he—he'd never speak to me again. He'd be so disgusted. He'd say, 'Did yer *show* 'em, Jemmy?' Well, *I'll show 'em!* Dad'll just laugh his head off."

She caught up her shawl and grabbed her gun off the deer-horn rack where it hung.

"Al Hix any *good* as a gunsmith?" she demanded of Becky. Her tone conveyed scornful doubt of any Maybrook gunsmith.

"First rate," Becky answered laconically. Without another word, Jemmy flounced out, banging the door loudly behind her. Becky went off into a peal of laughter. Her mother watched her somewhat mystified, but her face lightened at the wholesome sound of the girl's mirth.

"Jemmy seems so much happier all of a sudden," Mrs. Landers remarked. "Did you notice how confidently she spoke of her father's return? Yet, only this morning she said she would never see him again. And I'm afraid I couldn't answer her. We haven't talked at all at our work."

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"Oh, yes! I noticed!" Becky replied, giggling exultantly. "Simon is a wonder!"

"Becky, it has just occurred to me that I might have a sort of tea party for everybody after the Shooting Bee. We have hardly touched the tea Captain Clark gave us. And I had some other left. I could make corn cakes with berries in them."

"Splendid, Mother! Only you'll have to stay indoors baking all day instead of watching the match. You won't see Simon wielding the hickory, either."

"I really would rather. I hope you don't mind my saying so, dear, but I can't enjoy seeing people shoot as much as you do. When *you* shoot I always feel proud of you and wonder how *my* daughter can do it. But I can't appreciate good marksmanship as you can. And I'd really just as soon not see Mr. Kenton whip anybody. I always feel so sorry for the culprit."

"Sorry? Why? Serves them right," Becky countered with cheerful indifference. She agreed with Kenton. Anybody who did not keep his efficiency with the rifle at its highest degree—knowing how much depended on it—deserved a thrashing. The delinquent would receive no pity from her.

When she reached the smithy with her own rifle, she found nearly all Maybrook gathered about it. Simon sat on a stump before the door, his rifle across his knees and a four-foot stout hickory stick in his hand.

"Anybody that gits lammed with that'll know it,"

Mrs. Morton remarked. "Hickory is mean. Gown folks an' children agree to that." She laughed. "Even the twigs sting meaner'n maple nor birch."

"Don't yer go ter sassin' hickory, M'is Morton," Simon replied. "Along with deerskin clothes an' tomahawks an' jerked meat an' log cabins, an' usin' animal bird calls for signals an' ter lure game, the hickory tree an' its uses is one o' the good things we got from the no-accaount redskins. *Pohickory*, the Cherokee calls it, but it don't need so long a name. Hickory is enough. It gives us the longest, straightest logs fer buildin', an' the best wood fer noggins an' frontier crockery, an' fer furniture. Its bark is the best fer makin' hobbles fer horses. Its nuts is food in the fall—mebbe not so good as meat but as good as bread. An' they're butter in the spring. Injuns showed the fust frontier folks haow ter squish an' squash the green nuts ter git the milky fat aout'n them fer butter when their bar's grease was done. An' the wise ol' men o' the Cherokee towns was the fust, so fur as we know, ter use pohickory switches to lam the praoud seats o' the young. Hickory is the flag o' the frontier. If us frontier folks is purty smart boys an' gals most o' the day from the time we kin toddle till we're gray-headed, it's coz Parson Pohickory has *made us* smart good an' proper when we warn't! Parson Pohickory has give us the habit o' bein' up an' movin', coz he's made settin' daown too durned uncomfortable. It's a tree fer men—is ol' hickory."

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"Yeh. Fer men," said Mrs. Hix, after the delighted guffaws, which followed upon Kenton's oration, had subsided. "Everything is fer men on the frontier. I was sayin' t'other day as I guess the Lord ain't never made a country fer women."

"No!" Simon fairly roared at her. "Coz why? The Lord's got sense! Give women a country? They talk too much. They'd talk the grass off it! They'd philosophize it bald! I tell every one an' sundry, right naow, that I'm aout fer bar! I'll git the philosophizin' aout'n Maybrook if I have ter pass hickory ter every mother's son o' 'em, male *an'* female." He swept a dark and menacing look over each of the women in turn. There was another roar of laughter.

"Mother is fixing up a tea party with berry bread for everybody after the shooting. If I tell her what you've been saying about women, Simon, maybe she won't invite you. So you be careful," Becky cried merrily.

"Three cheers fer M'is Landers!" Simon answered promptly. The cheers were given heartily.

"Yer old fox!" Mrs. Hix said, smiling.

"Simon Kenton, I never saw a woman so full of words as you are today!" Jemmy accused him defiantly. "And as to philosophizing, Simon Kenton, well I've come out here to teach you not to philosophize about whether Daniel Boone's girl can shoot! Out for bear, are you? So am I! Show me your targets."

It was a shouting, laughing group which jostled through the fort gate to the cleared space between the palisade and the forest, led by the belligerent Jemmy.

"Git the idea, naow?" Simon whispered to Becky. "Gloom is purty nigh aout'n their bones already. The glooms is like rheumatiz. Yer got ter limber 'em up."

Jemmy scored with her first shot. Simon had set up the target, which was a large cross, painted white with Indian paint, and nailed to a tree at a hundred yards. The marksmen would try to shoot as close to the center of the cross as possible. Just as Jemmy was taking aim, she suddenly shifted her gun up and to one side and pulled the trigger.

"What in thunder——!" exclaimed Anton Weiss. "That shot ain't anywheres near the cross!"

But Al Hix, whose eye was quicker, cried out,

"Fust class! She seen a squirrel on that hickory to the left thar——" He ran to the tree, picked up something and came slowly back, measuring his paces. "She's Dan'l Boone's gal, yer bet! Shot him plum through the head at thirty yards." He exhibited the squirrel.

"Purty good, seein' yer warn't raised in Maybrook," Simon commented. Jemmy tossed her head; her eyes were sparkling.

"Ladies fust!" said Reuben Page, with an exaggerated bow to Becky. Becky shot at the target.

"Reuben," said Simon, "travel down that way an'

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measure haow fur off she missed it. I ain't got the heart, myself."

Grinning, Reuben ran to do Kenton's bidding.

"It's as good as yer ever done at target shootin' yerself," he said when he returned. "About thumb length from the center."

"Wal—I always knowed that gal would shame me in public some day. Naow, boys, I didn't trot yer out in the medder ter take yer ease, standin' still an' takin' yer time aimin' jes' ter convince yerselves yer kin shoot as good as a fifteen-year-old gal like Becky. Not much! Paowder an' lead is too valuable. Yer got ter shoot as if Injuns was racin' yer. Go to it, naow. Start a-runnin' fer dear life raound the saouth end hyar; an' load, aim, an' fire while yer runnin'. Tom Morton fust."

As one after another the men made the attempt, the rest of the group watched breathlessly. It was the running shot which gave the frontiersman his chief fame as a marksman. Nor was it any easy feat. His long-barreled heavy gun weighed about ten or eleven pounds. He carried his round bullets in a shot pouch hanging from his waist, and his powder in a powder horn hung around his neck. From the powder horn was suspended a tiny measuring cup, like a thimble, made usually of the tip of a deer's horn. In this kind of shooting, he had to measure his powder, grease his bullet—which in running shooting he did by popping it into his mouth to cover it with saliva—pour the powder into the

gun, drop in the bullet, ram the charge, turn and aim at his pursuer, shoot and disable him at least (though he shot, of course, to kill) while still running at top speed.

The results of the Maybrook demonstration proved to Kenton that the "glooms" had not deteriorated the marksmanship of the fort's defenders to any appreciable extent. But he did not, on that account, spare the rod. Perhaps Simon had a touch of the glooms himself and craved hickory exercises to work them off.

"This game ain't nothin' 'tall withaout real Injuns," he growled. "I see I got ter turn redskin fer the good o' yer hides. Git aout on the run agin, yer lazy fellers. Me an' Parson Pohickory'll race each other behind yer. An' I'm bettin' on the Parson!"

The whole field was presently in an uproar of shouting laughter, mingled with exaggerated yelps and howls whenever the Parson won, as "he" did with a telling frequency. It was rough play which spared no one's skin, but these were rough men who did not fear for their skins. The cream of the border jest came when Al Hix twirled out of range just as Simon had stretched forward and expended his whole force in a whistling blow. The blow struck air and Simon went down flat on the ground. Some one grabbed his stick, and Kenton had to gather himself up under a hail of thwacks. He dashed for the gate with the Parson in swift

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pursuit. For all his size, though, Kenton was the fastest runner in Maybrook. He made the shelter of the fort without having allowed Parson Pohickory to come within striking distance. Once he was inside the walls, the game was ended. Here Simon Kenton was commander-in-chief, and his garrison did not take liberties with him.

"Come in and eat and drink, Maybrook ladies and gentlemen!" Mrs. Landers called blithely from her doorway. She had been so busy preparing for her impromptu party that she, too, had forgotten the glooms. Her cheeks were flushed from the fire; her blue eyes had regained their lustre.

"Oh, Mother!" Becky cried. "We've had a wonderful time!"

"I showed Simon Kenton!" Jemmy hung up her rifle and began to jig in her moccasined feet on the cabin floor. The sight inspired Jim Carson to whistle a jig tune. Some of the men joined in.

"Keep it up, boys! Keep it up!" Simon roared. "I'll have the honor o' the first dance with Miss Boone while the tea's a-bilin'. Keep it up!" He tossed his cap on the floor to one side and leaped to position in front of Jemmy. So the two of them jiggled merrily, laughing into each other's eyes and answering the mocking quips of the onlookers with spicy frontier repartee.

"Tea is ready!" Mrs. Landers called presently.

"Kentucky is wonderful!" Becky sighed blissfully

as she sank down on the floor beside Tom Pim with two cakes in her hand, one for him.

"Yeh," said Kenton, gallantly handing Jemmy a steaming noggin.

"Three cheers fer Kaintucky!" Mrs. Hix cried. And the cabin walls rang with them.

CHAPTER XII

THE TREK TO BOONESBOROUGH

BEFORE the high spirits and good cheer, renewed so voluminously by the Shooting Bee, had entirely quieted, Simon herded his flock out to hew timber.

"I want more of a clearin' aout thar afore the redskins starts payin' visits," he said.

"I reckon the gate'll stand strengthenin', too, with some more timber," Reuben Page commented.

This was about a fortnight after the rifle match. Kenton knew that the way to keep people's minds in good trim, after a jollification had keyed them up, was to put the people who owned the minds to work. Working at timber-cutting, chopping fire logs, strengthening gate and palisade, sharpening axes, making deerskin garments and weaving linsey-woolsey; all these were acts which, of themselves, bred confidence and courage. They were proof to the pioneers of the first western frontier that they were there to stay.

While Becky and Jemmy could not fell trees, they could lop off the hampering branches and split kindling wood. Tom Pim and the other boys and girls helped them.

The snowfall that winter had been a very unusual one. There was still some snow on the ground. A few more mild days, however, would send the last of it away in water. Becky loved this time of the year, the first beginning of spring before a leaf had started, while the trees were still stark and the ground, patched here and there with white, oozed moisture and the mild air was stimulatingly and comfortably chill. She would sniff in that halesome air like a young colt nosing the wind. And she would look forward ecstatically to the day when violets would dot the grass of the brookside with blue and amethyst, and the dogwood swing white stars within human reach, as if it had gathered them as a gift for earth from the tranquil night sky.

Becky's special rapture in the spring was not lessened by the fact that spring was the herald of danger to the frontier. The border pioneers themselves often used the Indian term, "the pow-wowing season." In the lodges the red men gathered in spring to pow-wow, which generally meant to discuss their war campaigns for the summer. War was the Indian's "mid-summer madness." Against what tribe should they take the warpath when summer hung thickly green upon the boughs now misty with their first buds? The great war belt would be brought out of the council house and passed from hand to hand among the braves. Then a party would set out with it to make a ceremonial

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round of all their towns, and of all the towns of their allies, if a great war were projected. Once these red men, who were pow-wowing in the Ohio lodges while Becky sniffed the air in anticipation of violets, spent their springs in making ready for raids upon other tribes of their own race. Now the subject of all the spring pow-wows was the hated Paleface who had reared his cabins and forts on the sacred hunting pasture, Kentucky. Not only in Maybrook and other Kentucky stations, but in the Indian towns also, were tomahawks and scalping knives singing their war song on the grindstone, and powder horns being scraped, rifles tested and doctored, and bullets rounded from the molten lead.

The white men in every station on the dark and bloody ground expected a summer of sharp warfare. But they also expected to hold their own. The noise of Maybrook axes, thrusting the forest, the foe's natural ambushade, farther back from the white man's log walls, was not a dirge of retreat.

"It'll be as bad as last year, mebbe wuss," as Al Hix said, "but I reckon we'll stick ter Maybrook."

It was certainly not in the mind of the wood-choppers to abandon the station. And yet, before the logs they cut were hauled, they were making ready to leave Maybrook to the fury of the Indian and the reclamation passion of the wilderness.

The cause of the sudden exodus was the arrival of Jeff Smoke and Bill Canty with a message from George Rogers Clark. The two men came into the

clearing early in the afternoon. They were greeted with some reserve by the woodchoppers who, on seeing them by themselves, suspected them of having returned to outlawry. The suspicion was dispelled instantly, however, by Jeff, who produced a letter from Clark to Kenton.

Kenton read it slowly and carefully twice before he spoke. Then he said:

"Boys, Cap'n Clark advises us ter quit Maybrook withaout delay. That means naow, as fast as we kin git onter the trail fer Boonesborough."

Silently the men gathered closer and peered at the letter, which not all of them could read.

"Cap'n Clark must think the Injuns is goin' ter be powerful bad, if he's advisin' us ter quit," said Al Hix, with a troubled look.

"Wal, I don't believe in quittin' fer no redskins," Tom Morton protested.

"Nor me!" Anton Weiss agreed.

"If 'twas any one but Cap'n Clark, boys, mebbe I'd say the same," said Kenton. "But yer all know Clark. An' yer know he ain't a quitter. If *he* says quit, he's got reasons that is good enough fer any frontiersman. He says, hyar, as haow Jeff an' Bill can tell us more'n he's got time ter write. The letter is mostly ter show us as haow Jeff an' Bill is still in the army an' not slid back inter sinful ways." He smiled quizzically at the two ex-bandits, who grinned back at him in perfect good humor.

Becky and Jammy, feeling the full tensity of the

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situation, reached for each other's hands and held them tight. They stood as near to Simon as they could get without pushing any one else away and watched his face intently. But they did not speak. They knew that remarks from girls, even clever girls, would be out of place in this crisis.

"Wal, it started with some o' us spyin' round t'other side the Ohio from Louisville." Jeff Smoke began his narrative as, obeying a gesture from Kenton, the whole party moved towards the fort.

"What made yer think Injuns was wuss'n ordinary?" Simon asked.

"We found out the Hair-Buyer was sendin' men ter visit 'em. Seen 'em. An' sendin' goods an' powder an' lead. Our scouts captured a halfbreed from Chillicothe"—naming an important Indian town—"an' they worked on him till they drug some news out'n him. He said the Hair-Buyer had been visitin' all the Illinois tribes an' feastin' with 'em an' makin' treaties, passin' the war belt an' singin' the war song. An' he said the Hair-Buyer'd sent men ter Chillicothe with the war belt an' invited the Ohio Injuns ter jine in with him an' the Illinois an' clean up Kaintucky. An' he said as Black Fish had started fer Detroit ter drink the Hair-Buyer's health——"

"Them's Jeff's words, not his," Canty interrupted, grinning. "Black Fish went along ter see if he couldn't sell himself higher than what the Hair-

Buyer was offerin'—specially as he had some white prisoners; so the scout says."

"Dad!" Jemmy cried out sharply.

"Yes, Jemmy!" Becky whispered.

"What's that?" Jeff asked. Simon told him briefly.

"I'm right sorry fer yer, Miss Boone," he said, "but I wouldn't doubt Dan'l Boone's safe an' sound. Wal, the facts is that the Hair-Buyer has got them thar redskins, both Illinois an' Ohio. An' he's organizin' 'em best he kin with De Quindre an' Bird an' Hay an' some more officers. An' he's goin' ter send 'em inter Kaintucky with more powder an' lead than they ever smelt afore. It won't be fifty savages or thereabouts raidin' Maybrook on a excursion o' their own, like yer seen it afore. It'll be several hundred of 'em, with mebbe a dozen ter twenty white men leadin' 'em. Yer couldn't shoot 'em off."

"That's why Cap'n Clark sent us inter Kentucky," Canty put in. "Ter start all the folks from the stations this side inter Boonesborough ter hole up fer the summer, like bar in winter. An' all the stations t'other side, he said, is ter quit an' hole up in Harrodsburg."

"Lucky thing is," Jeff said, "that what with Black Fish goin' ter Detroit an' all the pow-wowin' back an' forth, we got plenty o' time ter warn folks. An' they ought all ter be moved easy afore the fust flock o' feathers comes in with the Hair-Buyer's generals."

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The two men slept that night in Maybrook and went on at dawn.

"I sure hate ter have ter git up an' git!" Tom Morton said, rebelliously. All Maybrook went about its meagre packing in much the same spirit.

"I just know Simon is feeling terrible about this," Becky confided to Jemmy. "But he'll never say so. No matter what happens, Simon makes the best of it."

"Yes. Simon has just two ways of facing mean things—with a joke or a tomahawk. It depends which one is called for. The tomahawk was no good this time."

Al Hix, aided by Reuben and Anton, was busy all day mending carts and harness, and shoeing horses. Jim Carson, Tom Pim and the Brown boys herded in the few cows and pigs belonging to the settlement. The women saw to the packing of their few household goods, their spinning wheels and looms, their spun cloth, yarn and so forth. Mrs. Landers had her books.

"They'll be so glad to see your books in Boonesborough, Mother," Becky said bravely. Her heart was sore at the parting, not only with the Maybrook fort, but with the cabin a few miles away in the forest. She loved the cabin and had hoped that, this year, they could safely return to it. She remembered her last visit and the memory added sharpness to her pangs.

"How could he talk about mercy in the wilder-

ness and yet come here with Indians to fight us? No one can understand a man like that!" Then she thought of De Quindre's promise, and hope lifted in her again. "Yet he said he would find Rod and take care of him and get word to me somehow. He promised it on his word of honor. And I know he will."

The mild air melted the last snow, and the spring winds, slowly sucking up the moisture, made the roads passable at last. At sunrise the little Maybrook caravan headed south towards Boonesborough. Kenton, his rifle over his arm, led the van. Men with their guns ready, and their eyes alert, marched directly behind him and on both sides of the wagons. Then came the boys driving the cattle and pigs. More men marched in the rear. The women and children rode, as comfortably settled as possible among the freight. Mrs. Hix drove one team, with Becky and her rifle on the seat beside her. Jemmy, too, sat in the post of guard on another wagon, where Mrs. Morton held the reins. Mrs. Landers, Ted, and Ruthie were in the wagon which Mrs. Hix drove. Mrs. Landers looked up frequently at Becky's slender sturdy back and alertly poised head and at the long barrel projecting from the crook of her arm.

"The frontier reverses so many things!" she thought. "If we lived in my old home, she would look to me for everything. I would be the protector of my fifteen-year-old daughter. Here she is mine!"

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"A few Injun scaouts shootin' from behind trees is the wusst we got ter look aout fer," said Simon. "Keep yer eyes peeled, boys. An' when I say boys, I'm talkin' ter Becky an' Jemmy, too."

"My eyes are good ones," Jemmy answered, cheerily.

"Wal, anyways, they're moughty purty eyes." Simon chuckled. "So keep 'em open!"

"You needn't be afraid I'll fall asleep," Becky declared. "I've got all my only and best beloved family in this wagon. And I aim to take care of them."

"Spoken like a man!" said Simon. "M'is Hix, seein' as haow yer holdin' the reins, yer oughter feel like yer was purty near that thar female Beulah Land yer was sighin' fer afore I took the glooms aout'n Maybrook. I mean the country made fer women where they do all the hard work. Yer even got aholt o' the hickory. Hope yer don't lam them poor horses ter death."

"Simon Kenton," she snapped back at him, with her rare and somewhat acid smile, "I ain't cravin' no new country where I can do all the hard work. *I got it.* As ter holdin' the reins, I've had plenty practice at that, drivin' Al Hix ter make a good gunsmith out'n a poor hunter. As ter hickory, I was raised under it, an' so is my young uns. If I didn't know how ter use it an' not abuse it, I'd ruin this fine saplin' on that wooden head o' yourn. All I'U ask o' Beulah Land when I git thar will be

a cushion ter put under me an' a place ter sit quiet where a no-account man can't sass me."

"Whew! I said yer'd talk that country bald, didn't I? Purty near lost my own scalplock," Simon said, when the laughter provoked by Mrs. Hix's speech had died down.

In this fashion they made the journey, with Kenton watching not only for their bodily safety but for their moods as well. He knew what a wrench it was for every one of them to leave Maybrook. He knew that some of them, too, were thinking of the lonely grave newly dug in the clearing close to the abandoned fort, the grave of Charlie Doty whose last breath had praised Kentucky. He knew, because his own heart was heavy within him. But he knew, also, that none of them could afford to think of these things. Brooding about the past induced forebodings as to the future—"philosophizin'." And there must be no forebodings; practical preparations, yes; but not forebodings. For undoubtedly, if Clark's information were correct, the immediate future would be so terrible that it must not be contemplated in advance. It must be met, when it arrived, with grim defiance—with blood and agony.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHISTLING REDSKIN

BECKY thought the Boonesborough fort an imposing sight. With its palisade enclosing a number of cabins and its towered corners or block-houses, it made a huge oblong of silent determination on the bank where Otter Creek flowed into the Kentucky River.

"Oh, Jemmy! I'll never love your home as I love my own. But I'll have to admit that you could drop two Maybrooks into the middle of Boonesborough and almost lose them!"

Jemmy smiled, pleased and proud because of her friend's frank praise.

"I love Boonesborough, of course," she said. "It bears Dad's name. And what a time he had in reaching it, coming all the way from Carolina; first alone, to choose the best place, and then with thirty men to cut a road so that settlers' wagons could come in."

"Yes, Jemmy. And when I think that, to make the road for us, he just slashed away brush on both sides of the Warriors' Trail! It gives me a thrill to think of the red trail of war, which I suppose is hundreds of years old, being turned into the Wilder-

ness Road. And just because there are no terrors that can turn Daniel Boone back!"

Jemmy nodded gravely.

"Somehow, this dreadful news which has forced all the folks in the small stations to leave, keeps me thinking about what Dad says about himself—that he is 'only an instrument in the hand of God to open the wilderness for settlement.' When I remember how deeply he believes that, Becky, I just *can't* really fear that white settlers are going to be driven out of Kentucky—and Dad's road, which he cut in the midst of fighting, become again only the red man's war trail. Dad, himself, wouldn't believe it. Wherever he is now, even if he is alone in the midst of hundreds of Indians, he doesn't believe it. He has said 'All the tomahawks in the world can't turn back one of God's purposes.' He's firm *all* the time."

"When anybody praises Simon he always says 'Wait till yer meet up with Dan'l Boone afore yer start ter callin' names!' " Becky said, and giggled.

"You know," Jemmy went on, her thoughts still profoundly occupied with her father, "how the Shawanos killed my eldest brother, James, and some other young men when Dad was trying to bring forty settlers into Kentucky two years before he founded Boonesborough."

Becky thought of her own brother, with a sudden pang.

"Yes, I know," she said gently.

Jemmy went on: "The others were sure it was the beginning of an Indian war, and so they decided to go back to the Holston and to Carolina. But Dad didn't want to turn back. I'll never forget him, Becky, standing there with James' body, scalped and bleeding, in his arms, and urging them to go on. Dad's firm and he believes in his mission from God. But that isn't all that makes him love the wilderness. It isn't even altogether because he lives by hunting, and selling hides. He loves hunting, too. But there's something restless in him. Mother says that, as soon as Kentucky begins to be safe and people are really settling here, Dad will pull out and go to some place as wild as this is now. He left the Yadkin as soon as folks began to settle round about our place. He said he 'wanted more elbow room.' I wonder where we will go next?"

Becky had noticed that since the day of the "Shooting Bee," Jemmy always spoke of her father as if she knew that he was alive and would return.

"It's awfully serious, really, losing all those men as prisoners to the Indians," Jemmy went on presently. "It leaves so few strong arms to work on the wall. There are yards of it still to be built."

"Yes. And we women can't help much with it," Becky admitted with a sigh. Alas! There were times when a girl had to acknowledge that she was no man!

Still the frontier could always provide special work for girls. And Becky and Jemmy were pres-

ently busy helping Mrs. Landers arrange her few household effects in the empty cabin which had been assigned to her. On various pretexts the other Maybrook women had insisted that Mrs. Landers take the one unoccupied cabin while they camped in the fort yard, or accepted the hospitality of those Boonesborough settlers who could accommodate them until their cabins were erected.

Becky's mother had protested against this disguised favoritism, as she always did, vainly. The Maybrook women, as they expressed it, "liked ter look out fer M'is Landers." In her refinement, her delicate beauty, her intellectual accomplishments—perhaps even in her extreme femininity, helpless before the rough tasks performed so ably by themselves—Pauline Landers symbolized some vague ideal which was precious to them. They guarded and preserved it with an unobtrusive but resolute zeal. Not even military orders from the fort's commander would have availed to place Mrs. Hix or Mrs. Morton in the only vacant cabin, while Mrs. Landers camped in the yard or bunked in on Mrs. Boone's or Mrs. Calloway's living-room floor.

"Thar's Ruthie, M'is Landers," Mrs. Hix said. "We got ter think fust o' the young uns. She might git cold, campin'."

"My family's good campers," said Mrs. Carson. "We like ter camp."

And Mrs. Morton insisted that nothing could keep her from sleeping on Mrs. Boone's floor.

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"I ain't hardly seen Rebecca Boone in years," she said. "An' we got that much to talk over, it'll take a couple o' nights ter run through it."

Mrs. Landers compromised by taking in Jemmy and Bess Calloway, until the new cabins should be ready, to ease the crowding in the Boone and Calloway households.

Bess and Jemmy were great friends and fortunately Bess and Becky took an instant liking to each other. Bess was fair, with reddish hair, and she was shorter and plumper than her two friends. Her father, Colonel Richard Calloway, was, after Boone, the most important man in Boonesborough. In Boone's absence he was superintending the defense works.

When a cabin was to be built on the frontier, it was customary for all the men near by to take part in the "Raising" as they called it. The very real spirit of neighborliness and good will with which they went about it was not their sole motive. It was the common danger, as well as good will, which inspired the neighborly acts of the pioneer. Cabin walls were a protection. No settler alone could build his own cabin in a day. It would take him much longer to hew his logs and raise his walls. The chances were that he would be shot down by red spies in ambush, lured by the sound of a single axe ringing its one weak note of challenge to the Indian deer hunter's forest. If the hewers and builders formed a large party, with look-outs posted

on the outskirts at those points from which danger might come, there was far less likelihood of attack unless a fairly large party of Indians had drifted that way. For the same reason, namely the general safety, all the women and children gathered with the men at the "Raisin'." If the Indian spies could report to their main body that the men were hewing and building without the presence of their families, the warriors would make a secret detour, rush upon the unprotected settlement and massacre the women and children. It is not difficult to understand why the red savage poured out his cruelest, most fiendish fury on the women and children. The white man was a warrior and hunter, like himself; for him he felt a respect which, in a degree, mitigated his hatred. He would not have resented the English-speaking adventurer into the wilderness, he would have made friends with him as he did with the French trader and hunter from Canada and Louisiana, if the English adventurer had not brought his family. The white family was the Indian's real foe, and so it was the family which felt the worst horrors of his rage. So when the men went to a raising, they disposed their families in the center of the group, as nearly as possible, and all of them enjoyed themselves, turning the occasion into a picnic.

The women brought work to do and plenty of food to cook. The children played near them, so that, at the warning sound of a bird call from the

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look-out, they could run with their mothers in behind the wagons which had been drawn together to provide a makeshift barricade in case of attack.

The necessity of providing homes for the Maybrook emigrants threatened to interfere with the pressing business of completing the fortifications, because the Boonesborough folk felt that it would be inhospitable not to follow the popular custom of assisting at the raisings. Kenton solved the problem by suggesting that a Maybrook man take the place at the wall of every Boonesborough man who helped build cabins. The idea was hailed with cheers. To the accompaniment of rough jokes and laughter, the men set out across the clearing to the forest; while the women began to prepare a feast, which would conclude with the famous stew pie.

Becky, Bess, Jemmy and Tom Pim were the stokers for the great occasion, carrying armfuls of wood to the cook fires.

"Becky," said Tom, "thar's a Injun drum in M'is Calloway's cabin. It's got a hole in it. Next time thar's a raid mebbe I can git one that hasn't got no hole."

"Maybe so, Tom."

"Becky, I thought mebbe next time the redskins come, I'd look out sharp fer one with a drum, an' then mebbe yer'd shoot him fer me. An' I'd sneak out an' git his drum. Would yer, Becky, please?"

Becky stifled her laughter. She always tried not to laugh at Tom.

"It wouldn't be safe for you to sneak out, Tom. The other redskins would kill you."

Tom's face shadowed.

"Course, if they did, I wouldn't git no drum," he said meditatively. "Mebbe they'll drop one, an' I can git it later on," he added, with renewed hope, "'specially if yer'll look out fer a Injun with a drum an' shoot him fer me."

"I'll remember, Tom." She giggled irrepressibly.

"An', Becky, be sure ter shoot him through the head so as not ter hit the drum; please, Becky. Only thing the matter with that thar drum in M's Cal-loway's is somebody shot a hole through it. It'd be a first-class drum but fer that. Now it's kind o' ruint."

"Tom, isn't it wonderful to see another Maybrook being built right here?" Becky exclaimed with a sudden rush of enthusiasm. "Let's go and look. The cooks have enough wood for a little while."

"All right," Tom answered, always docile to Becky's wishes. "I like ter see raisin's. Only I sure want ter practice on a drum afore I go ter Kaskaskia with Cap'n Clark. He says I can go ter do the drummin'. I'd like ter show the Hair-Buyer I can play on a Injun drum as smart as him."

One by one the logs were swinging into place and locking at their notched ends to form the square frames of the cabins. A heap of mud and moss,

with which to fill in the crevices, lay to one side. Logs were being split for the puncheon flooring, and thinner logs, with the bark on, cut to size for the roofing which was added when the walls had been raised about seven feet high. Sawing or chopping out the spaces for the door and the window was the builders' finishing touch. The householder would make his own door, at his leisure, and his own window panes of greased paper.

The sun set upon a new Maybrook, not completed yet, but definitely visible. A cow-bell violently rung by Mrs. Calloway announced that supper was ready.

"Wal, M'is Hix," Kenton drawled as he flung himself on the ground near her, "yer must o' ben out berry-pickin'. Yer face is sunburned red as a beet."

"Berries ain't even green yet, Simon Kenton. I got these hyar blushes bakin' and boilin' all day in this real he-country whar women do most o' the work," she snapped back at him. Her small black eyes had the acid glitter which Simon's pleasantries always brought to them.

"Oh, Mrs. Hix, you haven't turned against Kentucky, surely!" Mrs. Landers said, laughing.

"No, M'is Landers. I ain't. Regardin' Kaintucky an' the fine women in it, my thoughts is sweet as milk fresh from the cow. What turns 'em sour is a man what thinks too much o' himself."

"Wal, I wasn't aimin' ter churn yer, M'is Hix,"

Simon bellowed in order to be heard above the laughter.

"At my age I'd make better leather'n cheese," she remarked, handing him a piece of hot corn bread. "Fill yer mouth with that, Simon, 'stead o' foolishness."

"Where's Reuben?" Becky asked, suddenly aware that Page was missing.

"Mebbe he don't know the bell means supper," Al Hix said. "Or mebbe he didn't hear it."

"Holler fer him, some o' yer younger fellers," Simon said. "He was look-aout over a piece ter the north."

"Reuben! Ho, Reu-ben!" Anton Weiss holloaed.

"Ho, Roo-bing!" Ruthie piped as well as she could with her mouth half full of bread.

"Somebody better shoot," Tom Morton advised.

"You men go on eating," Becky said, jumping up. "I'll take my rifle and run down to the clearing." She was off before there was an empty mouth to answer her. She paused at the edge of the clearing and called Reuben's name. Then, receiving no answer, she fired into the air. When her shot also brought no response, she began to feel anxious. Her keen gaze slowly passed over the expanse of forest fronting the clearing. She saw a movement there and immediately slipped behind a tall stump and reloaded. Such stumps, about a settlement, were always tall, not because the pioneers were careless and wasteful timber cutters, as some modern writers

state, but because men could hide and reload and fire from behind them. They were shelter to men caught outside the walls in a sudden raid. Becky did not fire; for, in a moment more, she recognized Reuben.

Reuben had seen something. That was evident. He dashed zig-zagging into the clearing and leaped behind a stump. She saw him peering to one side of it, his rifle ready. She heard him utter the one bird note of warning. She answered it softly. He turned and saw her. In another dash he reached the stump next to hers and again uttered the warning note so that the men in the fort yard could hear. Becky thought, with a sinking heart, of the great gap in the wall. She glanced back and saw the men on their feet, screening the retreat of the women and children into the fort, their rifles over their arms.

"A war party?" she whispered.

"Seen only one," he answered. "We better run. Run crooked."

So, zig-zagging to discourage marksmanship, they ran like mad into the yard.

"What did you see?" Colonel Calloway asked.

"One redskin. Queer thing about it, I heard him fust 'way off. He warn't slinkin' up. He was whistlin'."

"Redskins don't whistle," Calloway said.

"That's what I said. Bymebye I seen him. An' he's a redskin sure 'nough. Big feller, scalplock

tied up with feathers an' all. He was bandagin' his ankle like he'd hurt it."

"An' whistlin'?" Kenton asked.

"Yeh. Don't sound reasonable, but it's so. Sounded like a reg'lar tune, too. Yer didn't hear me call?"

"No. Got keerless over the food," Al Hix admitted.

Carefully as the men had been watching the face of the forest, they had missed seeing the mysterious whistling Indian emerge. He had wormed out, flat on the ground. They saw his rifle barrel, presently, projecting past a stump more than halfway across the clearing. In the moment of breathless intensity that followed they heard the unmistakable sound of an English tune blithely whistled.

"Redskins don't whistle," Colonel Calloway repeated. He gave orders to the men to aim in such fashion as to make a close ring of fire all round the stump whenever he said "now!" Then he shouted:

"Come out, you whistling red devil!"

The answer came back instantly:

"Calloway, yer blamed fool, put up yer gun an' let me come home!"

"Dad!" Jemmy shrieked and sped into the clearing as if the wind were in her heels.

"Dan'l! Dan'l! M'is Boone! It's Dan'l!" The whole yard was in a shouting turmoil of joy. The women and children poured pell-mell out of the fort. Jemmy was dancing along back, holding to

the arm of a tall semi-nude savage in feathers and paint, who limped a trifle.

"Wal, folks, how are yer? Glad ter see yer! I'm tired an' hungry. Run all the hunderd sixty miles from the Scioto an' dassent kill game till I got ter Blue Licks. Run four days. Had ter double back some, an' swing up through the trees some too, ter throw the redskins off my trail. Twisted my ankle back thar a ways."

Daniel beamed out from the midst of family embraces.

"I might have known it was you, Daniel," Callo-way said, "when Page here said the redskin he saw was whistling."

"Yeh. Dan'l's the only man I ever heard of in Kaintuck," Kenton supplemented, "that would whistle on the trail. Plum crazy!"

"I'm partial ter music 'ceptin' at meal times." Daniel flung himself on the ground. "Give me some food. An' then I'll tell yer a story."

CHAPTER XIV

DANIEL BOONE TELLS A STORY

WHEN Boone had appeased his hunger, he lay back with his head on his wife's knee and one hand holding Jemmy's.

"Wal, I been in plenty wars," he drawled comfortably, "but I never wrastled fer glory with a nobler foe than them biscuits o' Sarah Hix's. An' that stew pie! Jeremiah ain't done more lamentations over the beans in Babylon than I done in Chillicothe thinkin' o' M'is Calloway's an' my Rebecca's stew pies."

His friends smiled back at him in silence. They knew that Daniel must take his own time and way of telling a story. Only Ted found the delay too great a strain.

"Did you kill *lots* of Indians?" he asked eagerly. Boone laughed.

"Not so many, son, not this trip. I was mostly studyin' how ter make a break. A little o' even the best Injun sassiety goes a long way with me. Fust thing I want ter tell yer is that, barrin' poor Tom Chester, the rest o' the men is safe. They're prisoners ter the British in Detroit. The redskins killed Chester."

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"We faound Chester an' buried him," Kenton said, "but let's hear it all, Dan'l."

"Hyar goes. Black Fish took us ter Chillicothe. I'd got him in the notion o' adoptin' us. He was tickled ter death ter git me agin an' anxious ter obleege me about savin' my friends. Things was goin' all right fer a week or so till all the braves from the other towns come in. Then they started celebratin'. I had ter go through all the ceremonies o' bein' turned inter Black Fish's son. They pulled out all my hair 'ceptin' the scalplock. Say! I must look a sight, eh?"

"Fur be it from me ter contradict a old friend," said Kenton, grinning.

"Then they scrubbed me somethin' terrible ter wash out the white blood. Then they painted me an' trimmed me up purty with red feathers. Bein' the son o' the chief I got special attentions! An' Black Fish christened me, Injun style, an' give me the name o' Sheltowee."

"What's that, Dad?" Jemmy asked.

"My gal, it means Big Turtle. The turtle has some religious meanin' fer them. An' I was a big one! So fur, so good. We was all treated fine, but they watched us so close thar warn't a chance o' makin' a break. An', o' course, they didn't let us have no knives nor guns. Then, as I said, the warriors come visitin' from all round. An' the dancin' started, an' they toted out the liquor, an' let Bedlam loose. The upshot o' the carousin' was that

they begun discussin' the perils o' lettin' so many white men live. They wanted ter make a big time o' it by burnin' some an' scalpin' the rest. Things was sartainly lookin' black fer us when that renegade Frenchman, De Quindre, come limp'in' inter Chillicothe with a sore ankle."

At the mention of her Wolf's name, Becky caught her breath.

"Oh, Dad! That terrible fiend!" Jemmy gasped.

"Yeh. Queer fish, De Quindre. Seems he'd ben down this way with some o' the tribe, tryin' ter waylay Clark's powder. Must o' got separated, somehow, when he was lurkin' round Maybrook plannin' ter raid it. His Injuns went on home without him. An' he fell in a bar pit an' hurt his leg."

"Oh, Becky!" Mrs. Landers exclaimed; "suppose it had been the pit near our old cabin! You went there a few days after he had been at Maybrook." She blanched at the very thought of what must have befallen Becky, had she encountered De Quindre.

"Mother darling, don't frighten yourself by imagining impossible things," her daughter admonished her. So De Quindre had gone to the Ohio towns, after all, though he had said he would not. Well, perhaps the condition of his ankle had made it necessary, Becky pondered.

"De Quindre made a great fuss over me, bowin' an' scrapin' an' talkin' respectful an' elegant. Always did say he was the finest gentleman I ever seen. I told him that even if he did fight with In-

juns agin' white men, he'd oughter remember his own mother was white an' his father, too. An' he oughter stop the Injuns from murderin' their prisoners. I told him they'd chose some ter torture an' burn already. Wal, he said he fought with redskins agin' us coz he was a British officer an' that was the sort o' troops they give him, an' it was his duty as a sojer ter wipe us out root an' branch, them bein' his orders. He said the Hair-Buyer give the Injuns orders ter take prisoners, an' not ter massacre an' scalp 'em. Then he shrugs his shoulders an' throws out his hands in that French fashion o' his an' says the Hair-Buyer don't know Injun tastes so well as he might! He says, too, that he himself ain't tenderhearted when he's fightin', nor any time much. But, he says that torturin' an' burnin' prisoners is agin' *his* taste, an' he'll stop it if he can."

"Did he try to stop it?" Becky asked. "He'd have to take a big risk, himself—interfering with a lot of drunken, bloodthirsty braves in their own town!"

"Yeh. I knew that. An' I warn't countin' much on him. Thought he was jes' talkin' sugary ter me fer politeness an' old times' sake. Yer've heard me tell how De Quindre an' me fell in tergether once when we was huntin'? But, no, sir! He plum meant it! I had ter admire him when he cut the ropes off Bill Hamlin that they'd tied ter the stake naked with the black moccasins on him."

"They make them thar death shoes o' bar, don't they? An' put 'em on with the black fur aoutside?" Kenton asked.

"Yeh. Wal, there was a awful howl when he cut them ropes. Some o' the braves run at him with tomahawks in the air. Golly! I never seen a man's eyes like his. Green fire. He kicked the nearest one in the stomach an' doubled him over. Then he says somethin' short an' sharp like a rifle crack, an' pushes the others out'n his way with his elbows. Wal, he sure got their attention. Black Fish confided ter me arterwards that it would have ben bad luck ter kill him, coz he ain't human anyway, havin' them greenish wolf eyes. An' he'd ha'nt 'em. 'Pears like the partikler devil o' that tribe is a wolf-devil. So they got ter be keerful."

"Does De Quindre know that?" Becky asked. She, too, had thought he looked like a wolf, she remembered. It thrilled her imagination to hear that the Indians had wrapped such a fearsome superstition around his personality.

"He knew they was afeared o' him, but he didn't know jes' why till I told him. He thanked me most polite fer givin' him some useful information." Boone laughed. "Wal, he saved us. No doubt 't all about it. Then he has a pow-wow with Black Fish an' the other chiefs. An' he says as how Black Fish would make a terrible big killin' with Governor Hamilton by comin' inter Detroit with all them prisoners, specially me. Ter hear De Quindre

tell it, yer'd think the Hair-Buyer ben livin' jes' fer the chance ter git interduced ter D. Boone Esquire!" He chuckled.

"We got word Black Fish had took some prisoners ter Detroit," said Al Hix.

"So off we starts. De Quindre went along ter make sure thar'd be no tomahawkin' on the way. Some o' them young braves was plum sore still coz he'd spiled their party. De Quindre said he'd ben wantin' ter go ter Kaskaskia, coz thar mought be a boy thar he wanted ter git news of. But he reckoned he'd have ter leave that till later an' go with us. I asked him if the boy was his brother or kin, coz he 'peared ter be so worrited not ter be able ter look fer him. He says no, but it's the brother o' a partikler friend o' his, a lady named Mademoiselle Mercy. An' he'd promised ter hunt him up this trip."

Becky was grateful to the dusk which had enveloped the group; for her heart gave such a thump that the blood rushed to her face. She wanted to cry out and to weep, or laugh, she was not sure which. She held herself silent and rigidly still with an effort.

"Wal, we reached Detroit without accidents, thanks ter De Quindre. Funny thing"—he chuckled reminiscently; "one night things was lookin' right bad, account o' some o' them sulky young braves 'lowing as how they was goin' ter scalp three o' the men. De Quindre heard about it. He never said

a word. But when we made camp an' was eatin', he come inter the circle, noiseless as a shadder, an' sat down in the middle o' them young braves. He was all wrapped round in a wolf pelt with the head comin' down over his cap. I noticed he had a pelt folded small an' tied on his back, when he fust come ter Chillicothe. Must have ben that wolf skin. In the firelight them green eyes sure had a wild glitter! Wal, one look at him settin' thar, like a green-eyed wolf on its haunches, settled them braves! So we come ter Detroit with all hands alive an' wearin' their hair."

"Did he say where he'd got the wolfskin?" Becky asked, controlling her voice none too well.

"Killed it, o' course, gal. It warn't no supernatural wolf," Kenton said mockingly. "I declar' if Dan'l ain't got our Becky-boy all excited about them thar green fiery eyes an' devil wolf actions!"

"Never yer mind what Simon says. He's got ter poke fun," Boone said to Becky.

"What happened yer in Detroit?" Mrs. Hix asked. Mrs. Boone had not asked any questions. She seemed content to sit quite silent with her husband's head in her lap and her own hand lying on his breast. The gentle gaze of her large dark brown eyes never shifted from his face.

"Wal, De Quindre toted us all inter the fort ter visit the Hair-Buyer. It's a good strong fort. An' let me tell yer folks, Detroit's quite a town. It interested me ter look round. O' course, what I set

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out ter do was ter git the Hair-Buyer ter turn the boys loose an' let 'em come home. So I talked moughty nice ter him. He says ter me 'Colonel Boone, I esteem it a honor ter meet the most famous frontiersman in Americy.' I hope none o' yer is gittin' jealous." He chuckled at his own jest.

"That's what he called me. Wal, we talked back an' forth, thar. An' he says as how we oughter give up fightin' the British an' be friends. An' I says as how we in Kaintucky ain't got nothin' agin' the British, an' would like ter be friends——"

"What's that?" Colonel Calloway rapped angrily. "Are *you* going back on America and the Revolution?"

"No; jes' talkin' sugar ter Hamilton fer my own purposes," Boone answered calmly. He was used to Calloway's suspicious and violent temper. "An' I told him we was jes' fightin' fer our homes, an' how thar warn't no American army troops in all Kaintucky. Jes' a handful o' poor settlers tryin' ter live peaceable in the wilderness. No money nor rifles an' powder ter make war on the British nor nobody else. I didn't think ter mention how Cap'n Clark's gittin' ready ter raid his forts ter the south o' Detroit an' run him out'n the Illinois." He laughed again.

"Yer sure did overlook somethin' thar, Dan'l." Kenton grinned appreciatively.

"An' ter prove what a good friend I always ben o' King George's, I pulled my commission out'n my

wallet whar I always carry it an' showed it ter him."

"What is that?" Becky asked.

"Why, back in the war with the Shawanos—Dunmore's War—Lord Dunmore put me in charge o' the forts on the Holston an' he give me my commission as Cap'n. I always liked Dunmore. Mebbe coz he liked me an' never lost a chance ter speak a good word about me. So I've kep' the commission."

"That's the thing I don't like!" Calloway burst out violently. "Daniel, you're neither hot nor cold! And it's that kind the Bible says we're to spew out of our mouths!"

"Uh huh," Daniel grunted. "Any feller, that's aimin' ter *spew* me, has got ter be strong enough in the jaw ter *chew* me, fust. I'm a tough mouthful fer a rash an' foolish eater. Never did see no sense in hatin' a man coz he's got different ideas from mine, nor coz he's tryin' ter shoot *me* by way o' provin' ter himself his ideas is right. I always liked Dunmore an' I'm right proud o' havin' that commission."

"What did the Hair-Buyer say to it?" Jemmy prompted.

"Wal, he was terrible pleased. It made him believe me. So he ransomed the men from Black Fish. But he wouldn't turn 'em loose. I failed thar. He kep' 'em. They're safe with him, though. They wouldn't have reached Chillicothe alive if he'd left

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'em with the Injuns. De Quindre warn't goin' back with Black Fish. An' even if he did go, he moughtn't have ben able to save 'em. Purty sure not. Coz them devil superstitions don't work all the time. Any man that knows Injuns knows that."

"Did the Hair-Buyer ransom you, too, Dad?"
Jemmy queried.

"No. He offered Black Fish one hundred pounds fer me. Which is a powerful lot o' money for one old leather-stockin'! But Black Fish's heart was sot on me. He wouldn't give me up fer nothin' that was offered him. Then all the folks in Detroit made bids. An' when they seen Black Fish wouldn't sell, they give me everything they could git me ter take. It was plum embarrassin'. The Hair-Buyer give me a horse packed with clothes an' one thing an' 'nother. The folks round thar passed the bag an' made up a purse. But I refused it. I told 'em I never expected ter make money enough sellin' hides at a dollar a skin ter repay 'em an' I warn't a man ter accept charity. Then bymebye Black Fish an' his braves an' Sheltowee started back fer Chillicothe."

"Ben thar long?" Anton Weiss asked.

"Yeh. Too long. Some o' their scouts ben in Kaintucky an' found out Maybrook was deserted. So, fust thing I knew, the war belt was passin' through the Injun towns. I acted like I warn't carin' a mite. But, inside, I was near crazy. I seen

as how I got ter escape an' give warnin'. But 'twarn't easy. This hyar Big Turtle was watched day an' night."

"How did you do it at last?" Becky asked eagerly.

"I know Mr. Boone did something very clever," Mrs. Landers said. Her eyes, too, as well as Becky's, were sparkling with zest in Daniel's tale.

"No, Ma'am. 'Twarn't so much clever as quick. Black Fish took his Big Turtle an' a few men down ter the mouth o' the Scioto ter boil salt. One day a great flock o' turkeys come along, flyin' low, an' Black Fish took his eye off his son fer a few minutes ter watch 'em. An' Big Turtle passed with the flock!" He chuckled again. "I slipped inter the brush an' they couldn't find me. Always was good at hidin'. Swum the river soon as 'twas dark; an' run like a rabbit day an' night. They crossed in canoes an' chased arter me. But, one way an' 'nother, I threw 'em off."

"You might have got lost!" Mrs. Landers exclaimed.

"He never does, Mother," Becky said.

"No. I never got lost in the woods yit," Daniel said, thoughtfully. "But, I recollect, one time I was *bewildered* fer three days. That was the fust time I crossed the mountains, in 1760. Cut my name on a tree thar in Tennessee. Simon seen it a few years ago."

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"Yeh. I was crossin' a crick an' I seen somethin' queer on the bark o' a tree. So I went up an' took a look. An' I read"—Kenton spelled out the now famous inscription—" 'D Boon cilled a bar on this tree 1760.' It was like shakin' hands with home folks ter see it."

"I kin' o' like ter leave my record in places I was the fust white man ter see. An' a tree is a faithful friend. It don't fergit yer. It keeps yer record."

Though he had confidence in the memory of trees, he might not have believed that the tree Kenton had seen would stand for a hundred and forty years; nor that historians and map-makers of the future would trace Daniel Boone's wanderings largely by the "D Boon" cut with his hunting knife on the trunks of trees in North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky.

"We got ter fix that wall sudden, boys," Boone went on presently. "Fer the war belt's passin' round. Black Fish'll know I come ter warn yer, an' so he'll hurry matters. We'll have ter keep a sharp look-out fer spies. Reckon their scouts is on the way already."

"Clark sent us warnin' o' the paow-waowin'," Kenton said. "Told us ter move daown hyar. Movin' all the folks from the small stations inter Boonesborough an' Harrodsburg. Some of 'em quit altergether an' went aout'n Kaintuck, back ter Virginny an' Carolina. Reckon Clark'll choose his

time, when the Injuns is comin' daown on us, ter slip away northwest behind their backs an' raid Kaskaskia. Seems likely."

"Yeh. Looks like he'd do that," Boone agreed.

Becky, listening, felt as if she had received a cold shock.

"But, Simon—Mr. Boone—of course Captain Clark is coming *here* before he goes to the Illinois?" She fairly wailed the momentous question at them.

"No. He couldn't do that." Boone answered. "All that trip across the War Trail? 'Twouldn't be practical. He can't come."

"Cap'n Clark would sure be flattered if he knowed Becky Landers was 'most cryin' coz he warn't comin' ter say goodbye ter her!" Kenton joked at her.

Becky said nothing. Presently she followed her mother indoors, still silent. Clark was not coming. She would not be able to join his army. She could not go to find Rod. How would Rod come home to his mother now? And when—if ever?

CHAPTER XV

BECKY TURNS WITCH-DOCTOR

BECKY did not blame Clark. She felt that he was innocent and helpless in the matter. Nevertheless her disappointment and her anger at circumstances were deep. She became strangely silent and glum for Becky Landers. Nothing less than the unfolding of alabaster and gold and rose in dense patches on the placid green waters of Otter Creek could have lifted the gloom from her young spirit. Water lilies! How she loved them!

"Jemmy!" she cried. "Let's get Bess and go down and pick water lilies this afternoon. Oh, Jemmy, dear! It really is spring!"

Spring had indeed come to Kentucky with all her marvels of leaf and flower, of bright wings and mellow blue sky. In the surrounding forest, in the low dense bush along Otter Creek, there could be heard the perpetual contented chipping of birds. Though Becky had suddenly forgotten her sorrows in the thrill of water lilies, the beauty of spring was not the dominant thought in the minds of the men and women within the huge still unfinished fort. How could it be, when many of them had only recently arrived from Boiling Springs, St. Asaph's and other

small stations which the red peril had forced them to abandon? In all Kentucky now only two settlements stood in challenge to the Indian and the Wilderness, Boonesborough and Harrodsburg. Spring, as these refugees in Boone's fort knew, opened what would probably be the most terrible year they had yet experienced. They gave Clark's warning its full value, and made ready with all speed to meet the onslaught. Men worked all day strengthening the log palisade. The gunsmith was busy overhauling rifles. The raucous sound of knives and tomahawks on the grinding stone cut the air. White men, standing grim upon the Dark and Bloody Ground, were using every hour of the green pow-wow season.

But three girls could be spared for a short while to pluck water lilies.

"The Injuns must give way ter us, not we ter them," Boone said, putting down his drained cup. He and Kenton and Colonel Calloway were drinking tea with Mrs. Landers, towards the end of the afternoon.

"Yeh, Dan'l. This year it's win or die fer white folks in Ol' Kaintuck," Kenton agreed.

"But do you think the Indians ever *will* give way to us, Mr. Boone?" Mrs. Landers asked, with a gesture of hopelessness.

"They'll give way coz they must, Ma'am." was Daniel Boone's answer.

"I wish Becky would come in," Mrs. Landers said presently. "It must be nigh sundown."

"Becky an' Jemmy Boone an' Bess Calloway's aout on the crick in the boat pickin' water lilies," said Kenton. "Them gals has got the feel o' spring in 'em like the birds. They was singin' when I come up from the shore."

"That was several hours ago." Mrs. Landers looked troubled.

"Don't worry, Ma'am," said Boone. "That gal, Becky Landers, is too sharp an' smart a fightin' man ter git in trouble. John!" he called to John Floyd, who was passing the open door of the cabin. The young man stepped to the threshold. "John, yer best run down ter the crick an' call them gals in. Mrs. Landers is kinder nervous."

"Don't worry about Becky Landers, Ma'am!" Floyd laughed. "The only reason your girl ever gets into any trouble is just to show us how smartly she can get out of it." He turned about and went swiftly through the gateway of the palisade toward the brush-grown shore.

"Ever since the red men took my boy, Rodney, I've been fearing and fearing that something as dreadful would happen to Becky," said Mrs. Landers. "My husband killed by them, and my son stolen, and no way for me, a woman with two small children and no men folks, to leave Kentucky and go back to Virginia—we'd be no safer on the journey than we are here—is it any wonder that I

am afraid for my Becky? She is so fearless. She traps, and she hunts deer like a man, and never thinks of danger. Yet what could she do if Indians came upon her?"

"Believe me, Ma'am," Kenton replied. "She'd git away from 'em. An' they'd never know haow she done it!"

"It's not like my Bess, though, to stay out so late," said Calloway. "I'm just as well satisfied to have John go and call the girls in. Bess said she wouldn't stay out long."

"Spring an' water lilies, Richard." Boone smiled. "Them two things could make even us grown folks fergit scalpin' an' warwhoopin', let alone what time 'tis by the sun nor the clock."

"Hullo!" Kenton, who was sitting nearest the door, looking out, rose and strode across the step. "John's comin' back a-runnin'!"

"Is Becky with him?" Mrs. Landers cried sharply.

"John's alone, Ma'am."

"Indians!" Her white lips barely whispered the word. The three men hastened to meet Floyd.

"They're gone!" Floyd shouted. "I found the boat, overturned on the shore—beached—so it wouldn't float down here. Lilies scattered around. Indians have got the girls—carried them off. I saw the print of a redskin's moccasin in the sand by the boat. I figure, by the way the bottom of the boat's been drying, it must have happened all of two hours ago."

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"Our daughters, Daniel," Calloway exclaimed.

"An' Becky Landers, that I love like my own," said Kenton.

"John," Boone said, "run an' tell my wife an' M's Calloway. An' then git some o' the other women, that hasn't got gals out thar in the woods with redskins, an' have 'em come an' stay with M's Landers. This'll hit her hardest o' anybody. Simon, round up a dozen men an' we'll start. *We're goin' to git them gals.*"

It was not long till the search party filed through the gate. Mrs. Landers watched them from her cabin door, her white lips moving in silent prayer.

The men stopped by the overturned boat, examined its immediate surroundings with minute care, and tried to reconstruct the scene in their minds as it must have occurred so that they might deduce from it the further actions of the red men. Had they killed the girls, or carried them off? With dread in their hearts, they searched the brush for the bodies.

"Look!" Kenton cried. "Ain't that a lily hangin' on that thar bush acrost the crick?"

"Yer right, Simon!" Boone exclaimed.

"An' I'll bet Becky Landers dropped it thar a-purpose!" Simon added as he plunged through the water, with the others following.

Just what *had* taken place in that scene, which Boone and his search party had tried to visualize?

For ten days or more a party of Shawano scouts

had been slinking like wolves through Kentucky to learn the present circumstances of the smaller stations which they had harried so cruelly the year before. They had found them all deserted. But they had also found the tracks of wagons and horses and men all going in the direction of Otter Creek. So they had followed to spy out the situation in Boonesborough. Today they had lain for a couple of hours hidden in the brush of the farther shore while one of their number, perched in a tree, reported to them such preparations for defense as he could oversee from his nest in the hickory boughs. Presently he had warned them to be very quiet and alert because a boat was coming upstream. A few moments later they had seen it for themselves; a boat with three girls in it. One girl rowed slowly into a dazzling lily patch close to the shore where the Indians lay. She stood up, firmly anchoring her craft with her oars, while her two companions began to pull lilies and toss them into the boat. For some time the Indians made no move. They waited to see if any of the men from the fort would join the girls. But the sound of the axes and hammers at work on the outer defenses of Boonesborough did not lessen. The look-out slid down noiselessly from the tree and consulted with his party.

"It will be easy to seize and tomahawk them," said one; "because now that the boat has swung round, their backs are turned. They are talking

fast and laughing so much that they will not hear us approach."

"Yes," the one who had acted as look-out admitted. "But the girl in the red dress is Boone's daughter, and the one with the oars is Calloway's. And, since Boone and Calloway are two very brave and clever men, it would be better to save these two girls' lives and marry them to Shawano warriors. Theirs is good blood to bring into the tribe. It was a great loss to us that Boone himself escaped from Black Fish."

Though some objections were raised, in general the red scouts agreed with him.

"Who is the other girl? Let those of us, who want a scalp, take hers. Then we shall all be satisfied," their leader decided.

Silently and stealthily, hardly disturbing a leaf, they crawled, an inch at a time, out of the thicket. In one noiseless leap, they surrounded the boat and seized the three girls, clapping a hand over each girl's mouth to prevent an outcry. Then they rushed into the forest with their captives, while two scouts remained behind to row the boat to the other side and beach it. As Becky felt herself tossed over a brawny bare shoulder, she dropped a lily. She had held an armful of them when her captor grasped her. So suddenly had catastrophe overtaken her, that she had hardly moved a muscle. Her lilies were crushed between her breast and the brave's shoulder. Terrified as she was, and knowing well

the deadly peril she was in, she had no tendency to faint. In any emergency Becky's wits went to work at once. She saw the lily that had fallen from her hand on the bush, and she saw it as not only a lily but a good idea! She was glad that the two scouts, who had stayed behind to beach the boat, crossed the creek higher up and joined the van of the party. They missed seeing the lily! She wriggled a little and managed to drop another. So, while Kenton was mistaken about her having "done it a-purpose" when, some hours later, he saw the first lily on the bank, he was not so far out, after all, in his reckoning of Becky Landers' resourcefulness!

After a half hour of swift travel, the Indians halted.

"We will now kill the useless girl, hide her body under those logs over there, and then hurry on," said the leader.

"You must not kill us," cried Jemmy Boone, who had been familiar with the Shawano tongue since her childhood in the Holston valley.

"Not you, but her," pointing to Becky.

"What does he say, Jemmy?" Becky asked. Jemmy told her.

Becky's face may have turned a shade paler, but she answered bravely.

"You must not interfere, nor anger them, Jemmy, or they will kill you and Bess, too."

But Jemmy, herself, was no coward; she was

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Daniel's own daughter in courage. She turned and spoke earnestly to the Shawano leader, telling him that he must not kill Becky Landers or the white man's vengeance would follow him and his people forever, because Becky was beloved throughout Kentucky. Even Jemmy herself was amazed at the effect of her speech. The Indian who had raised his tomahawk, to make an end of Becky, dropped it again.

"Becky Landers!" and "It is the White Witch-Doctor!" went from lip to lip. The Indians crowded about Becky, staring at her and fingering her hair and her dress.

"You know of her?" Jemmy asked, puzzled as to what all this might mean.

"Indians learn everything. It goes from tribe to tribe across the forest, like the wings of a bird through the sky. We know, as all tribes know, that Becky Landers is the very powerful Witch-Doctor of the whites. We have heard sometimes she is a girl and sometimes she is a boy, changing herself at will from the sewing woman to the hunter and warrior. The Shawanos also have powerful witch-doctors but we have no woman among us who can change into a man. Ours have strong magic, but they remain women. We will take the White Witch-Doctor also to our towns, where she will turn all the newly born girl children into sons and warriors."

This also, at his command, Jemmy translated to Becky.

"Well, I can't make their babies over, Jemmy, and you know it," Becky said in her matter-of-fact way.

"No. And I'm afraid they'll kill you when they find it out."

"They may never find out. We'll be missed soon, Jemmy; and the men will come after us, and——"

"They may not find us in time. It'll be only luck if they hit our trail. They may go miles in the wrong direction."

"No, they won't. I've been dropping lily petals, and tearing off bits of my sleeve. They'll find us. We have only to take care that we're alive when the men catch up with us. So, Jemmy, you tell the Shawanos that I'm a wonderful witch and that sometimes I turn into a wolf and even into a turkey. Tell them, Jemmy, and don't be afraid. I have a plan for helping the men to find us. And take as long as you can to tell it. Spin it out, Jemmy, because the longer we can keep them standing here, the sooner our men will catch up with us."

Jemmy felt very dubious about the wisdom of Becky's orders, but she obeyed them. And she took as long as she could to tell the Shawanos. Becky helped her to delay by frequently interrupting her. The Shawanos, who were simple-minded savages and loved magic more than anything in the world, even more than scalps, were entranced. They

wanted to know how and when and why these animal spells came on the Witch-Doctor.

"Tell them that they come on at night. When it is a dark night without stars, I am likely to become a turkey. But when there are both stars and clouds, as there will probably be tonight, I am most likely to be a wolf. However, that is not certain, for I *may* become a buffalo. Impress upon them that it is not I, but spirits, who change me and that I have to obey the spirits. Also, Jemmy, tell them that the most frightful things happen to any one who attempts to interfere with me while my magic is working."

Still utterly mystified, Jemmy obediently transmitted this last bit of news also to their captors. The spell could not hold forever though. Presently one of the Indians remembered the danger of lingering there, within a few miles of Boonesborough. They picked up the girls again and dashed on at double speed.

At nightfall they made camp in the bed of a ravine by a tiny brook where they could build a small fire without its smoke rising, or its flames glowing, through the forest to betray them. They fed the girls generously with the jerked meat they carried. Then they lay down to sleep, placing their prisoners inside the circle of warriors. In a moment or two Jemmy whispered:

"They are noticing that the sky is cloudy and are

wondering if you are going to turn into a wolf and perhaps slit their throats."

"That won't do!" Becky replied, decidedly. "If they get scared that way, one of them will tomahawk me. Tell them again that, when I am a wolf, I never hurt any one who does not touch me. Tell them that, at this season of the year, I only talk to the other wolves and tell them not to hurt the young deer." Jemmy repeated this to the Shawanos.

"Becky," she said, "I've just worked out in my mind what's happened to make them believe you're a witch-doctor. They've heard how the men say you're as smart a boy as you are a girl, because you can scout and hunt like a boy. They've got it twisted and believe it's some magic that makes you over into a boy whenever you please!"

"It would be funny, if we felt like laughing," Bess Calloway murmured.

Presently Becky raised herself on her elbow and snarled. Immediately every Indian sat up. Snarling again at intervals, Becky slowly gathered herself up on her hands and knees.

"What you told us is true," a warrior said, in awe-struck tones to Jemmy Boone. "See! The sky has both clouds and stars and the White Witch-Doctor has become a wolf!"

"A wolf! It is true!" the others whispered, stupefied by the magic of Becky Landers crawling among them and alternately snarling and sniffing at the food remains. Presently Becky lifted her head

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and howled a long most faithfully simulated wolf howl. She repeated it, with a slight but curious variation of her own. There was not a man in Boonesborough who did not know that call of Becky's. And, at last, Jemmy and Bess understood why Becky had turned Witch-Doctor. Somewhere on the trail behind them, which her lilies and bits of sleeve had marked, friends were, perhaps, following. They could not see the shreds and petals after dark but they could hear that wolf-call and learn from it the location of the Shawanos' camp!

"That is the call of the spirit-wolf, who runs with her message to the forest wolves," Jemmy said to the Indians, so that they should not suspect any mischief. Twice more, Becky repeated the calls; first the perfect imitation of the real wolf's howl and, after it, her own personal signal. Then she slowly resumed her natural shape and manner as Becky Landers and stretched out on the ground.

"Pretend to be asleep, so that they will go to sleep at once," she muttered through her final snarls. Well, she thought, she had done her best. She could do no more! With closed eyes, breathing with heavy regularity as if in sleep, she lay with every sense alert, listening, hoping, praying.

Moving through the dark, slowly and cautiously, Boone and Kenton and the other men surrounded the camp to which they had been faithfully led by the White Witch-Doctor's very powerful magic. So softly did they approach, as they closed in on all

sides, that not one snoring Indian woke. It was not till the rescue party stooped and picked up the girls and started off with them that they made noise enough to rouse the red men. And then it was too late for the Shawanos to give battle. Those who attempted to reach for rifle or tomahawk were struck down. The rest fled in mad panic across the dark ravine, with shots cracking around them.

"Becky Landers," said Simon Kenton, who was carrying her on his back, "that thar howlin' set us on the right trail sure 'nough when we was plum bewildered. But, tarnation, gal! That was the dingest fool chancet I ever knowed yer to take! What beats me is why they didn't tomahawk yer at the fust yelp."

"Oh, no, Simon," Becky answered, shaking with laughter and sobs now that the terrible strain was over. "You—you see, Simon—I've—I've turned Witch-Doctor! I—they——" She gave up and giggled helplessly as she mopped up her tears with her torn sleeve.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RED MEN BESIEGE BOONESBOROUGH

“WE can expect them any time now,” said Boone. “But we’ve got the wall fixed strong enough so they can’t rush it.”

“Take ’em a few days ter git home an’ report,” Kenton remarked, alluding to the scouts who had captured the three girls. “But no daoubt it’ll be a hot summer!”

The “hot summer,” predicted by Simon, began almost immediately. A week or so after Becky’s performance as Witch-Doctor, a hundred Indians attempted to storm the walls. The newly erected palisade had been well soaked with water, and the red men’s efforts to set it afire failed. Their losses from the shots of marksmen, posted at numerous loopholes, were so heavy that they withdrew before sundown. The settlers endured the pangs of thirst for two days before they ventured to open the gate and go down to the creek.

“We’ve got ter keep the barrels full,” said Boone. “It’s terrible dry weather. Men an’ beasts must drink. An’ we can’t let the redskins burn us out.”

Wary as the Boonesborough men were, they were caught off guard in the next raid, a little later. Some

of them were hauling water, and several others were out in the clearing, when the painted warriors broke, yelling, from the dense green of the forest. The water carriers, being on the creek side of the fort, gained shelter without serious mishap. Two or three of the men in the clearing were wounded before they reached the stumps. At the first volley from the Indians Boone fell, shot through the ankle. Regardless of the onrushing savages and a hail of bullets, Kenton dashed to his rescue. Seizing Daniel in his powerful arms, he swung him on his back and bore him to safety within the palisade.

Becky and Jemmy, with faces blanched to a chalky whiteness, had seen Daniel's peril and Simon's gallant risk, but not even Jemmy had ceased from her task of greasing bullets for the riflemen at the loopholes. In the almost continuous warfare that followed, Boone directed the defense from his bed while his ankle was mending. It was indeed a "hot summer." A few graves in the clearing, dug at night in the brief lulls between raids, told of brave men who, like Charlie Doty, had been forced to drop their rifles with none to pick them up.

"This is jes' the old style o' Injun raids," Boone commented on the day, early in September, when he was able to be about on foot again. "They've all ben small parties o' sixty ter a hunderd. That ain't what Clark warned us was comin'. Reckon the wusst is still ahead o' us onless Clark was mistaken."

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The very next morning brought the fulfilment of Clark's prophecy. During the darkest hours of the night the sentries heard slight sounds which might well have been made by the breeze that comfortably cooled their faces. The rustling of leaves, even on a breezy night, had become a suspicious sound by now; so, with the first light of dawn, keen eyes were peering from every loophole. The gaze of each watcher traveled slowly over every foot of ground and tree-growth directly opposite his loophole.

One or two had already discovered Indians in the forest beyond the clearing when Boone sent word from the tower, by Jemmy, that Boonesborough was surrounded. Leaving Reuben Page to take his place in the tower, Daniel came down to confer with Calloway and Kenton.

"Surrounded, you say, Daniel?" Calloway queried.

"Yeh. Count 'em in hunderds this time. They're thick as flies acrost the crick an' in the wood yonder. Reckon Clark was right. It's war ter the knife this time. They aim ter wipe out Boonesborough entire."

"We're short o' water," said Kenton.

"Yeh. We meant ter fetch in all the water we could carry this mornin'. Thar's all the pails standin' out, an' the barrels fer the horses ter pull down ter the crick. Dassent go now."

"Some o' the roofs is dry," said Al Hix; not that his listeners did not know it as well as he.

Several of the women had gathered about the group of men in the yard. And, like the men's, their faces were grave, but they gave no sign of the fears they felt for themselves and their children. Even the little children were quiet and did not cry. They knew they must make no sound of distress which might be heard outside the walls.

Ruthie, holding tightly to her mother's hand, whispered: "Don't be 'f'aid, Mother. *I'm* here wiv you." A lump rose in Becky's throat as she heard her.

"It's bad, having no water," Boone repeated.

"Dan'l, we fetched in water on the Holston when the Injuns was outside," his wife said. "Reckon Kaintucky women can do the same."

"No, no, Rebecca! I wouldn't take that chance. Thar's hunderds of 'em out thar."

"Hunderds is no wuss 'n fifty, if we can fool 'em," she replied.

"What's that, Rebecca?" Mrs. Hix asked.

"I mean fer us women ter go out fer water, like we never guessed the Injuns was thar. Mebbe they'd lie quiet, thinkin' nobody believed Injuns was within miles o' the fort. What they want is ter git inside an' surprise us. They'll expect us ter leave the gate open, an' be right keerless, arter we've brung in the water."

"I'm willin'," said Mrs. Hix.

"It would be no worse than staying inside for them to burn us up," Mrs. Landers said.

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"Injuns know our children is always with their mothers," Mrs. Morton's voice was strained. "All the young uns would have ter go, or 'twouldn't look natural."

"No, no. I won't hear to it!" Boone repeated. Kenton also shook his head.

"We can't let you take the risk," said Calloway.

"Dan'l, yer *can't* fight 'em without water," his wife insisted.

"If only we three girls could carry enough water!" said Becky. "Perhaps we could try it—making several trips?"

"The fust trip would be yer last," Kenton declared. "Dan'l, them redskins has ben thar fer a good while. Their usual habits is ter try ter rush a fort soon as dawn comes. Near sunup naow. Yit they ain't made a move. They is studyin' abaout us. What d'yer think?"

"Reckon they want ter hear us gittin' up an' movin' 'round an' talkin', Simon, so they can git a notion o' our numbers. I was keerful ter tell Black Fish an' the Hair-Buyer we got a lot more men in Boonesborough than thar is."

"If they think there are so many men inside, Mr. Boone," Becky said, "they are less likely to attack us women if we go for water. They'll be waiting and watching to learn how many men you have here and studying how to keep you in ignorance of *them*. It is just as Mrs. Boone says: if they think there are

many men they will wait for you to get careless and let the gate stand open."

"Becky's talkin' sense," said Mrs. Hix. "We got ter git water."

It was the hopelessness of Boonesborough's situation, without water, which inevitably decided the question. The men were forced to yield and to let the women and children take the risk.

"We better start makin' a noise kinder natural," said Tom Morton.

"Yeh," Boone agreed. He gave orders for several of the best marksmen to pose at some of the loopholes. The other men scattered, singly and in pairs, about the large enclosure. Boone gave them instructions to laugh and talk loudly and shout from group to group, so as to give a false impression of their numbers.

Meanwhile the women and children had collected every vessel in the settlement which would hold water, and Becky and Jemmy had harnessed the work horses to the wheeled sleds on which stood the big casks. This labor had not been done silently, but with laughter and shouts.

Boone himself stood in the gateway, and made rough jokes at the water brigade as it filed out. Becky led the procession, riding astride one of the horses.

"Yer got ter bring in enough water ter do a real washin'," Boone yelled. "Every shirt in Boonesborough is siled." He knew there must be white

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men from the Illinois forts with the Indians who could understand what he said. They would weigh his words, and the women's.

"Take all the water in Otter Creek ter keep Boonesborough men clean," Mrs. Hix shouted back.

Those first moments were terribly tense ones. Would the Indians make a rush now, striking down the women and children and storming the gate and the walls? But no; the surrounding leafage did not stir. Yet, perhaps they were only waiting till the women reached the brink of the creek; and then would fall upon them with their tomahawks? The men watched, in an agony of anxiety, as the procession went on steadily down the trail.

Some of the women began to sing as they dipped their pails. They filled the biggest pails first and poured into the casks till these were brimming. They could hear the loud talking of the men, who were playing the roles assigned to them by Daniel.

"Jemmy," Becky called. "Let's go over in the woods after dinner and get nuts."

"Oh, yes! Bess! Want to go in the woods after dinner?" Jemmy passed the call on.

"Yes. We'll take the children."

"I'm going!" Ted cried.

"Go and get nuts," Ruthie echoed in her shrill pipe.

"Guess we'll have ter make another trip fer water fust," said Mrs. Morton.

"Lots more washin' ter do sence all them extry men come ter Boonesborough," Mrs. Brown shouted.

"Mebbe we better bring the clothes down an' wash 'em in the crick," said Mrs. Boone.

"Yeh. I reckon," Mrs. Hix answered.

"Ruthie, look at the flower Mother found," Mrs. Landers cried gaily, holding up a blue blossom. She had been no whit behind the other women with chatter and merriment.

"Wal, I reckon we better start back now," said Mrs. Hix, when, at last, every cask and pail was filled.

The water carriers turned homeward slowly, still chattering. Becky felt a chill sensation in her spine, as, letting the others go ahead, she followed behind, offering her back as a target to the hidden foe. Were the leaves along the shore stirring now? Would the painted braves leap out and fall upon them from behind? Becky dared not glance over her shoulder. Keeping their eyes resolutely in front, the women went slowly up the trail to the gate, and passed slowly through it. There must be no hastening steps on the last lap of their perilous journey.

"We fooled them, Simon!" Becky whispered triumphantly. Kenton almost crushed the breath out of her as he lifted her down.

"I can't say nothin' ter yer women," said Boone, huskily. "Ben the wusst half hour I ever lived through."

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Colonel Calloway slowly swung the gate to and barred it. The heavy hinges, of course, were inside, so that the foe could not slink up in the dark and pry them off. Under orders, the women and children went into the fort. Becky and Jemmy, carrying their rifles, climbed into one of the look-out towers where Reuben was sentry. The loud talking of the men continued in the fort yard while they swiftly took up positions at the loopholes.

"The redskins are puzzled now," said Becky. "I suppose they'll wait a while for the gate to open again."

"Yeh," Reuben answered. "They'll wait a while. Then they'll come."

The minutes dragged by. In the fort the children huddled together in silence. Ruthie hugged her doll tight to her breast. Her large round blue eyes were fixed watchfully on her mother. All the women were greasing bullets, their ears strained in expectation of the warwhoop.

"Something moved then," Becky whispered. She shivered slightly, but her hands were steady.

"Yeh."

For an instant it seemed as if a strong breeze suddenly passed over the leafage circling Boonesborough. Then the silence was rent by the blood-chilling sound that had been suggested to red men in the beginning, perhaps, by the furious shriek of the gale.

"*Heh-yeh-i. Hey-yeh-i. Heh-yeh-i-heh!*"—savage frenzy screaming from four hundred throats.

"Fire!" Boone's voice rang out. The volley, which roared from the fort, took deadly effect and staggered the feathered mob. The Indians fell back, as thirty of their leading braves dropped. They had been so sure of taking the garrison by surprise! Then they came on again, yelling the more fiendishly and firing, only to be met with another deadly volley. Most of their own fire was ineffective. Their bullets could not penetrate the heavy logs of the outer defenses. They aimed at the loopholes, and also fired over the walls, but the loophole men were too agile for them, and most of their other bullets hailed down harmlessly on the ground within the enclosure. Mrs. Calloway, who was serving balls to her husband and her son, Flanders, got a flesh wound in her arm. Al Hix was hit in the heel. Another shot ran a shallow red trail across Tom Morton's cheek as he leaped back, not quite quickly enough, from his loophole.

"Becky," Jemmy whispered, returning from a look around below, "Eleven white men are with them—and *De Quindre!* Black Fish and *De Quindre* are on the other side of the fort from us."

Becky was glad she could not see her Wolf from this side. Furious fighting continued for another hour; then the red army withdrew.

"White men too strong. Go home;" the words of Black Fish were plainly heard within the yard.

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The defenders could also hear the noise of the Indians' retreat through the forest. It grew fainter till it ceased in the distance.

"Thank God!" Calloway exclaimed. "They've gone!"

"Keep at yer posts, boys," Boone said. "That's a trick o' De Quindre's."

"Think they'll come back?" Calloway asked, amazed.

"Yeh. They was too noisy. Injuns don't make noise gittin' through brush."

Daniel was right. The attack that day was only the beginning of the longest Indian siege in frontier annals. The red men kept out of sight till dawn the next day. Then, again, they rushed, yelling, upon the fort. They found out that their ruse had failed when another devastating shower of hot lead met them halfway. But they did not give up. Every day the defenders had to resist intermittent but violent onslaughts. Every night they fought fire, as blazing torches were flung in on the roofs. Sometimes the flying flame, for an instant, outlined a man dousing a roof with water. And an Indian rifle would crack. Sometimes, too, the shot hit the target, and some one fell, wounded, from the roof.

"Jemmy, you and I and Bess and Tom are smaller than the men," Becky said. "We can lie flatter and show less bulk to shoot at. And we can soak roofs just as well as they can."

Jemmy agreed. So the other boys and girls of their age, captained by Becky, Jemmy and Bess, took over the duty of keeping the logs wet. As the days went by, and the red army still beset the fort, the water failed. Then, in the dead of night, Reuben, Anton, Flanders Calloway and John Floyd, stripped and painted as savages, slipped over the wall, went to the creek, and returned with full pails—having passed, undetected, through the camp of warriors.

CHAPTER XVII

BECKY'S WOLF COMES BACK

"OH! Will they never go?" Bess whispered, with parched and cracked lips. She flung her hands over her ears.

"Heh-yeh-i! Heh-yeh-i! Heh-yeh-i-heh!" The warwhoop swelled up again from the woods as the red men rushed out on the eighth day of the siege.

Dawn, filtering through the shadows of Boonesborough, showed men's faces haggard and their eyes bloodshot from sleeplessness and the constant watch, and women and children pale and silent with strained dry mouths. As the warwhoops and the volleys of shot poured forth, the women went to their task again of greasing bullets and loading the extra rifles. There were extra rifles in Boonesborough now, dropped by men too badly wounded to hold them, or by men who would never need them again.

"What's that?" Jemmy said suddenly. She and Becky listened.

"One of the Frenchmen is calling something to our men!" Becky ran down to the spot where Boone stood, with Calloway and Kenton beside him.

"I wouldn't listen to that scoundrel," Calloway counseled.

"It's a trick, yer bet!" Kenton declared.

"What is it?" Becky and Jemmy both asked, breathlessly.

"That French devil out thar says as haow this fightin's a bad thing an' ain't gettin' us nowheres. An' he wants us men ter come aout an' talk things over with him an' the Injuns an' make terms. He wants Dan'l an' Calloway special."

"Oh, Daddy, don't!" Jemmy threw her arms around Daniel's neck.

"I say the redskins'll rush in here the minute the gate's opened," said Calloway.

Daniel shouted to De Quindre:

"Yer want the gate opened so yer can rush in an' tomahawk us an' our women an' children."

"No. We will not rush in. I give you my word of honor," the answer came back promptly.

"If he gives you his word of honor, I'd believe him. He doesn't mean to rush in," Becky said. "But he could have some other trick in his mind to get the fort and all of us. Because, of course, that's what he means to do."

"Don't go out thar, Dan'l," Kenton warned, "Becky's talkin' sense. An' so is Calloway, not ter mention me."

Daniel brushed his hand across his strained and reddened eyes. "Yer know how things stand with us," he said. "We can't hold out ferever, not fer

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many more days. Some of us is played out now. An' thar's dead men we ain't had time ter bury. An' wounded men we can't tend ter. If we git peace——"

"There's a trick in it," Calloway insisted.

"I'm willin' ter take the chance," Boone said.

"I'll take it with yer, but I ain't willin'," said Kenton, drily.

The parley continued for some minutes. Then, in spite of continued vigorous opposition from Richard Calloway and Simon Kenton, Boone agreed to the enemy's proposals. He and eight of the men would go out and talk matters over with De Quindre and his redskins.

"Make him promise on his word of honor to let you come back," Becky urged. Pressure was brought to bear by others, too. The defenders of Boonesborough wanted De Quindre to commit himself thoroughly. So Boone made the demand. De Quindre laughed.

"Gentlemen, why do you take me for a rogue?" he protested. "I am an honest soldier, like yourselves. I make my proposal for a peace talk for the sake of well-doing and humanity. I stand within rifle shot, even within a few yards of your guns. How can you suspect me of villainy?"

"I'm satisfied the chance is wuth takin'," Boone said. Followed by Kenton and the other men, who had also agreed, however doubtfully, to take the risk, Daniel strode out at the gate. Calloway got

up beside a homemade cannon of wood, which he had constructed, and ordered sharpshooters to post themselves along the wall. Becky's heart was throbbing with real terror now.

"He didn't give his word of honor," she said to herself. "He just talked all round it so that it sounded the same. But it wasn't! It wasn't!" She climbed up beside Calloway so that she could see what went on. The Indians were grouped at some distance—but De Quindre and the other Frenchmen stood quite near. He looked up, as once before out of the bear pit, into Becky Landers' white face, and his greenish gray eyes glittered. He smiled and swept the ground with his cap. But he said nothing to indicate that he and she had ever met before. Evidently he guessed that she had not told how she had trapped him and then let him go. Becky glared back at him; all the fear and anger she felt were in her eyes.

De Quindre gave his hand to Boone. The other men shook hands. A few compliments passed between them. De Quindre began to say that the British only asked of the Kentuckians that they give no more assistance to the American rebels. Chief Black Fish came up with several Indians and joined in the handshaking. He was overjoyed, he said, to see Big Turtle again. He said that, because they were so many and the Boonesborough men so few, two Indians must shake hands at once with one white man. Then the trick appeared! As soon as

there were two Indians holding each white man's hands, the redskins started to drag the men away. Kenton, who had warned the men inside to keep a sharp lookout for treachery, shouted. Calloway touched the homemade cannon off. It discharged and exploded with such a bang and a scatteration of bullets that the terrified Indians loosed the white men and ran! Rifles began to speak from the wall, and the Frenchmen and De Quindre dropped into the brush along the creek for cover. Daniel, Kenton and the other seven men sped back to the fort with Indian bullets flying harmlessly after them. Indians were not, as a rule, very good marksmen, above all when they were excited.

"That's what comes of trusting in the word of honor of a scoundrel like that Frenchman!" said Calloway.

"He didn't give his word," Becky corrected quickly. "He just talked round it." De Quindre was a wolf and a fiend, she admitted, but still, it was not fair to say he had given his word of honor and then broken it. Evidently his word meant something sacred to him, something even he would not betray. Becky's own code compelled her to be just, even to a wolf!

The Indians withdrew to discuss the next move. Meanwhile, De Quindre, hiding close to the bank of the stream under that side of the palisade, had been inspired with a new idea. At dusk he regained the Indian camp and presented this idea to his army.

It was quite dark when, with some twenty helpers, he returned to the bank and set to work with knives and tomahawks to dig a tunnel through the earth under the wall. Other Indians came up stealthily with powder to fill the tunnel. De Quindre's clever idea was to blast his way into this obstinate stronghold.

"Luck is not with me on this march," he muttered; "so I have to use my brains. It is a great waste of power to use brains as well as powder on these stubborn Americans!"

The bank rose so sheerly from the water that this side of the fort was considered almost sufficiently protected by Nature. There was no way of approach for stealthy feet. But the nimble-witted wolf had thought of a way! He and his men were working from an improvised raft, held steady against the shore by savages up to their armpits in water. There was no moon; the darkness covered them. De Quindre did not know that there was a young girl saturating the nearest roof with water. He did not see Becky Landers look down to the dark bank from which she had heard strange sounds issuing!

By this time the Indians were yelling before the fort gate and firing and throwing torches in order to keep all the defenders busy there, and so prevent any of them from discovering what De Quindre was doing elsewhere. When Jemmy came running up with Becky's warning, Boone hastened to investi-

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gate. Then he took a few men with him and began to dig outward from the cellar of the cabin whereon Becky was roosting with her pail. He had the advantage in the matter of tunneling because the cellar was already there; and, also, he had shovels and picks, while the enemy had only knives and hatchets. Presently he lowered a keg of powder, prepared a fuse and touched it off. The explosion tore a great hole in the earth and killed, or badly wounded, most of the Indians who were working in their own tunnel. The others tumbled out pell-mell upon the raft.

"That made 'em scamper perdigious!" said Simon, with great satisfaction. He fired toward the raft, which was barely visible for a few moments before it floated away. All night De Quindre urged his braves on to fling torches, but none of the roofs caught fire.

When dawn came again, it showed the environs of Boonesborough clear of Indians. The red army, defeated and disgruntled, had insisted on going home! There were shouts of joy as the harassed defenders realized their safety. Now they could eat and sleep again in peace for a little while at any rate.

Becky climbed the wall over the stream and looked down at the cavity made by the explosion. To her surprise she saw a long forked stick standing upright in a mound of earth and, in the fork of the stick, a piece of deerskin. It was fringed, that

scrap of deerskin, she noticed, as she clambered down towards it.

"A piece torn out of the skirt of a jerkin," she said, when she held it in her hand. "But who put it here, and why?"

She turned it over and gave out a sharp little cry at what she saw. There was lettering on that bit of wilderness note paper, done with the sharp point of a knife. What she held in her hand was, indeed, a letter to her from De Quindre written on a scrap of his deerskin shirt. It read thus:

"B. L. brother well Vincennes D. Q."

She thrust the precious thing inside her own deer-skin blouse. Rod was alive and well! She flung her arms over her face and burst into convulsive weeping. She did not guess that, from the brush across the creek, a pair of glittering greenish eyes watched her for a few moments. She heard nothing as De Quindre slipped cautiously away. He had waited to make sure that his message was seen by some one and taken into the fort. He had promised to let Becky know if he found her brother; and he did not consider his word fulfilled until Becky did know. It was dangerous, foolhardy, for him to linger there alone, letting his army go on hours ahead of him, but danger and folly were, after all, De Quindre's life. He would catch up with his Indians or reach headquarters alone. This swift shadow-runner of the wilderness could sift through the forest as easily as the silent-footed night. He

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feared nothing that roamed the Wild beside him; not the darkness nor the lonely silence, neither man nor beast.

The Indians came back again and again that summer and fall, but in fewer numbers; and they met with defeat each time. The successful defense of Boonesborough by Boone and his handful of sorely harrowed comrades was not only a momentous affair in Frontier history, it was an event of *national* importance. If Boonesborough had fallen, Harrodsburg alone could not have stood; the redskins, inflamed with success, would have beset it until it, too, fell. And without the Kentucky forts behind him, Clark could not have made his successful raids on Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Vincennes; the raids which won the whole Illinois Territory—the “Old Northwest”—for the American Union.

In the fighting that went on through the autumn, Kenton was badly wounded and Boone's son and brother were killed. But the little group of brave hearts, under Boone's captaincy, stood firm. At last the chill winds of winter brought snow, and a long welcome lull in their warfare. They also brought visitors to Boonesborough; and these visitors were persons of vast importance to Becky Landers. Who were they?

CHAPTER XVIII

BECKY PLOTS WITH THE OUTLAW

BECKY LANDERS was willing to admit frankly to any one that she was so excited she hardly knew what she was doing or saying. But, then, most of the other inhabitants of Boonesborough were in the same condition. The cause of it was Jeff Smoke, that ex-outlaw, now able lieutenant of George Rogers Clark, who was taking on a few recruits in the Kentucky settlements for the winter march on Vincennes. The camp lay just beyond the fort walls. At dusk on this very night, after a good meal of roasted deer, Jeff Smoke and his men would march with Tom Pim beating the drum for them. They would go first to Kaskaskia where Clark awaited them. The chief hunters of Boonesborough would set out with the "army," accompany it two or three days on the march, and then branch off toward the hunting grounds. Becky was going with the hunters, who were led by Simon Kenton.

Not even her timid mother had raised any objection to Becky's joining the hunting expedition. Mrs. Landers realized that, in Kentucky, people had ceased to be considered as "man" or "woman," or

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"boy" or "girl." They were rated chiefly as shots, or "guns." Because Becky was a crack shot she had stepped naturally into the place left vacant by a man who was going to Vincennes. Kentucky could spare all too few men for the long perilous march through wilderness and icy swamp. At most Clark would have only about one hundred and seventy, even with the addition of the garrison at Kaskaskia. The others must stay to guard the settlements and to provide food. It was this situation which gave such importance to Becky Landers' rifle.

At first Becky had been terribly downcast at the news that Clark himself was not coming to Boonesborough. For months she had been planning just what she would say to him to influence him into taking her to Vincennes where, according to De Quindre, her brother was. Once she had persuaded Clark she felt that she could safely leave it to him to persuade her mother. She saw Clark as a man who could do anything, whom none could resist, not even a terrified mother. But Clark had not come. Instead he had sent Jeff Smoke. And Jeff Smoke, hairy, low-browed, rough-tongued Jeff, with his evil past, would have no powers of persuasion with timid Mrs. Landers! Indeed, Becky's mother shivered inwardly every time he came near her, though she always spoke to him with perfect courtesy. She became really alarmed whenever she saw Becky talking to him.

Becky herself had always felt a little wary of

Jeff Smoke. But, since Clark was not coming, and Jeff Smoke was to lead the Kentucky recruits as far as Kaskaskia, Becky Landers had to go with Jeff Smoke if she were going to Vincennes to rescue her beloved Rodney. And, in order to do that, she must make him willing to take her. So, to achieve her ends, she had summoned all her wiles to win his friendship.

As a matter of fact, she could have succeeded with far less effort than she had expended. Jeff was flattered by the least attention from Becky Landers, whose skill with the rifle he admired tremendously. He was one of those strange creatures who have their loyalties but have, apparently, no standards of right and no sense of what is wrong. For instance, he was a little hurt and very much mystified by the settlers' disapproval of him for his former activities as a bandit. He could see no reason why people nervously, or suspiciously, locked things up when he dropped in to call! He thought it both unkind and silly. He confided this to Becky on the very day of the march.

"M'is Calloway done made a hole in the floor for her bit o' flour. Reckon ain't much flour left in Boonesborough? She's skeered I'll steal it. She's still holdin' that thar crazy quilt agin' me."

"Oh, Jeff, I wouldn't think *that*," Becky answered tactfully. She knew perfectly well why Mrs. Calloway had hidden the flour!

"Yeh. Hided it from me. If she'd have asked

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me I'd have done told her I didn't aim ter steal it. Don't want that thar flour. Meat's *my* food. Kind o' foolish, too, Miss Becky. It sure hurt my feelin's."

"Oh, Jeff, I'm so sorry your feelings have been hurt."

He gave her a grateful look.

"Yeh. Sure hurt 'em—havin' M'is Calloway think I couldn't git that thar flour out'n any place she hided it, *if I wanted it!* Must think I'm kind o' childish, like Tom Pim?"

Becky wanted to laugh, but she controlled the impulse and said kindly,

"Oh no, Jeff. Every one knows that Captain Clark wouldn't think so much of you if you were childish."

"They'd oughter! Cap'n Clark says ter me: 'Jeff,' he says, 'so long as yer *my* man an' so long as yer wearin' a sojer's uniform, I expect yer ter take nothin' that don't belong ter yer'—haw, haw!" Jeff threw his big head back and bellowed out a great laugh. "An' he goes on an' says 'Yer ain't got no uniform and yer ain't *goin'* ter git none! Yer'll be lucky,' says he, 'if yer still got a stitch o' deerskin on yer by the time yer git ter Vincennes. Like as not yer'll have ate it ter keep from starvin'. But,' he says, 'yer know what I mean, Jeff; an' don't yer play no tricks!' haw, haw! Sojer's uniform!"

"Well, Jeff, you see Captain Clark doesn't hide things from you."

"No, Miss Becky. He don't. He ain't got nothin' ter hide! Haw, haw! Cap'n Clark moves too fast ter 'cumulate goods. Haw!"

Then presently, after wrinkling his low forehead so that his bushy black eyebrows were almost merged in his thick mat of hair, in the effort of thought, he said:

"Yer Maw, now, Miss Becky, *she's* a lady! Know how I studied that out? Wal, she's skeery, yer Maw is. She's kind o' little an' weak an' jumpy——"

"Poor Mother saw father killed by Indians and then she lost my eldest brother, Rod. The Indians stole him and took him to Vincennes. Mother never got over it. She never will," Becky explained. She did not want Jeff Smoke to think that her mother was a coward, or even any more afraid than Mrs. Calloway and the other women who had suffered the same horrors.

"Yeh. She's skeery like a person that's sick. An' she's the one yer'd think would be most skeered o' *me*. An' she mout be, at that. But she don't show it, and she don't hide nothin' when I come around. She says 'Good-day, Mister Smoke'; an' 'Will yer set down, Mister Smoke?' like I was Mister Daniel Boone or Mister Cap'n Clark. She mout *be* scared o' Jeff Smoke but"—he nearly lost his eyebrows in his hair again, as he strove helplessly for words to frame his thought—"wal, yer Maw's a *lady*! An' " he grinned, "if yer wasn't sech a danged smart

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boy, yer'd be a lady yerself. Fer yer Maw's sake, I wish them Injuns hadn't killed yer brother."

"They didn't kill him, Jeff. He's alive. He's in Vincennes!"

Jeff stared at her, with his mouth gaping open.

"How d'yer know that?"

Becky hesitated for a few moments, studying his face.

"Can you keep a secret, Jeff? If I tell you something, can you be sure you'll never tell it to anybody?—*not to anybody?*" she repeated it solemnly.

Once more the eyebrows rose and almost fringed the hair.

"I mout have ter tell it ter Cap'n Clark. I'm his man. Wouldn't tell it ter nobody else."

Becky thought rapidly. Clark was far off, in Kaskaskia. By the time Jeff reached Kaskaskia it would not matter what or whom he told. The point to make sure of was that he would not open his lips in Kentucky.

"You see, Jeff," she went on. "It is for my mother's sake that you mustn't tell. It would frighten her and make her terribly excited and perhaps even kill her. That is why I haven't told her myself. If you told some one here, that person might repeat it and Mother might hear it—and maybe die of it."

"I wouldn't do nothin' ter hurt yer Maw," Jeff said positively. "Yer Maw's a lady. *She* never hid no flour!" Evidently the episode of Mrs. Callo-

way's secreted flour rankled in the hairy giant's mind.

"Would you do something to help her and to make her happy?" Becky had her clue to the emotional workings of Jeff Smoke now, and she pursued it earnestly.

"Sure would. She's such a purty lil creeter! An' as fer me tellin',—why, Miss Becky, I can keep a secret so good nobody couldn't find it in me, not if they shot me full of holes ter git it! 'Twouldn't leak, even then. Cap'n Clark knows that," he concluded proudly. Then, while Becky still debated inwardly the dangerous policy of betraying her curious friendship with De Quindre to one of Clark's henchmen, Jeff added: "'Twould set me up fine ter do somethin' fer yer Maw; I'd like ter see her happy. An' I'd like ter show some o' them thar flour an' crazy quilt hidars how a real lady gits treated by a gen'leman what 'preciates ladies."

He grinned.

Becky hesitated no longer. She told Jeff Smoke about her strange meetings with Dagniaux De Quindre.

"Rod is in Vincennes, Jeff. And I must go with you to get him!"

Jeff's big mouth looked as if it would never close again. It had been slowly falling open during her recital, and now it became rigid with astonishment.

"I have thought it all out, Jeff. And it is a perfect plan. Instead of taking Tom Pim to beat

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the drum, you will take me! When the hunting party separates from your party, Tom will go with them and I will go with you. We will make the change during the night. You must see to it that the two parties separate at night, Jeff. That is very important. By the time Simon Kenton finds out next day that he has Tom with him instead of me, we will be far off on the river and he can't do anything about it."

Jeff nodded, still speechless. When at last he did find his voice he asked her if Tom were in the secret.

"Not yet," Becky answered, frowning thoughtfully. That was the one really dangerous thing about it, she added. Tom meant well but he might talk.

"Better not tell him," Jeff counseled. "Borrer his drum that night, or git it put some place whar yer can steal it when he's asleep." Then he added generously. "If yer don't like the notion of stealin' it, *I'll steal it fer yer!* Cap'n Clark didn't say nothin' about me not stealin' no *drums* when I'm in that thar sojer's uniform. Haw, haw. Anyhow I can fix it with him when I tell him I done it ter obleege yer Maw, what's a real lady. Cap'n Clark would do anythin' on earth ter obleege a lady. An' I'm the same way."

How well she had managed it, Becky thought! Her eyes were shining and her heart was still pounding with excitement when she slung her rifle over

her shoulder and started for the camp just before sundown. Most of the settlers went also, to give the men a royal send-off.

"Oh, Becky, what's that?" Mrs. Landers exclaimed as they neared the camp and a monotonous chant, increasing in speed and volume, struck upon their ears. Becky laughed and squeezed her mother's trembling arm.

"You know it isn't Indians, mother dear. Indians would never attack a camp as big as this one. It is only Jeff's men making ready for war."

"Yes. I suppose I knew that, dear," Mrs. Landers replied. "But I never can understand how white men can warwhoop and even dance the horrible scalp dance like Indians. Things that mean only horror and misery to us whites——!"

"Remember that Jeff and Clark and the others are going off to fight as savagely as any Indian, except that they won't hurt women and children."

"Yes. They are going off to fight for us. May God protect them. But, oh, I do hate the Indian sounds!"

Indian sounds swamped all others by the time the little party of settlers joined the warriors. It was a wild camp. Mrs. Landers clutched Becky's hand tightly.

In the center the men had erected a war pole. Not having any scalps, they had hung on it a couple of squirrel pelts. A score or more of Jeff's braves, stripped and painted, wearing feathers and brand-

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ishing tomahawks, were dancing the war dance about the pole with as much frenzy as any band of redskins. Little Tom Pim's tom-tom was almost drowned by the blood-curdling warwhoops. The tom-tom had been picked up after the siege of Boonesborough to Tom's unspeakable joy! Jeff himself was an alarming spectacle to the eyes of the timid! He looked bigger than ever and even hairier in his paint and feathers. And the black hue of war, emphasized by white streaks as well as red, on his face almost turned him into a black-amoor. Bushy black beard, bushy black eyebrows, thick long coarse black hair, and then black paint——!

"Jeff is a sight, isn't he, mother?" Becky said, chuckling.

"You don't know how thankful I am that you won't be in his company more than a day or two," Mrs. Landers answered, with a sigh of relief.

For a moment Becky's conscience troubled her. Still, she reasoned, she was not deceiving her mother in any mean way. She was only acting as the man of the family. Men did not tell their wives and children in advance about all the dangerous things which they were going to do in order to make life safer and happier for them. That was exactly her own situation, as Becky saw it. She was the man of the family; therefore she must use her own judgment about risks to be taken, keep her own counsel, employ all her wits and her talents as a good and

efficient frontiersman—and come home successful, bringing Rodney Landers back to his mother.

They were off at last, each man slipping along now, silent as a shadow, into the dusk of the winter trail. The two parties traveled together, at a good pace, for three days. Then they prepared to separate, though they camped together that third night also.

Becky feared some disaster at the last minute; but none happened. Tired from their swift travel, the hunters rested soundly. Tom, who always slept like a log, did not even turn over when Jeff Smoke's men and Becky Landers, with Tom Pim's cherished drum, moved off through the inky night.

"I got ter make a awful row soon as the boys find out yer ain't Tom," Jeff whispered to Becky as they marched on through the dark. "Got ter pertend I'm took powerful with surprise."

"Yes, of course," she agreed. "But you can tell them, too, that it is much better for them all that I came instead of Tom. Because you must have noticed that Tom tires much more quickly than I do. And, if we meet Indians, maybe I can play Witch-Doctor again. Tom couldn't." Becky could always point out several practical advantages in any scheme she devised!

"Yeh. That's so. But s'pose yer get killed in the fightin'? Never thought about that till now. It's got me worried."

"Well, if I get killed, it can't be helped," said

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Becky, practical-minded as ever. "Then you'll have to find Rod, yourself, and take him home to mother."

"Sure will. Yer maw's a lady. An' so is yerself."

"I'm not. I'm a bold, fierce, little drummer boy. You listen to me when I drum the British out of Vincennes!" She giggled softly.

Perhaps even Becky Landers' brave and merry heart would have quailed had she been able to foresee the hardships and the perils which were to beset her and the rest of George Rogers Clark's tiny army on that historic march.

But tonight, trudging through the crisp dark beside big Jeff Smoke, she saw only the fun of it. It was the most splendid adventure she had ever had! She swung along gaily.

CHAPTER XIX

BECKY BEATS THE WAR DRUM

SOME ten days after the gay departure from Boonesborough Becky Landers lay exhausted on the muddy bank of a marsh, watching rain clouds gather and hearing stubborn angry voices. She was numb with cold, hunger and weariness. Nothing mattered any longer. Even Rodney and Vincennes seemed vague and unreal. She wondered if she were going to die there, and did not care.

It had been a terrible march. Severe weather, scant food, and no covering at night had turned her gay adventure into a hideous one. The men did not dare light fires nor hunt, because of Indians. Flames shone far in the dark, shots carried a long distance, and this was low, open country half under water from floods and rains. The marchers sank to their knees, with every step, in water that was bitterly cold. They slept at night as best they could, wet through and shivering.

Jeff's men had begun to grumble and to threaten to turn back three days ago. But Jeff had induced some of them to continue by threats to shoot the first one who showed him a coward's back to aim at. Others he had cajoled with promises of a "big

hot feed" as soon as they came up with Clark. In one way or another he had kept them together. He had reached the rendezvous without being disgraced by deserters.

Now worse had befallen! Clark and his Kaskaskia garrison had also been tramping through bad weather and almost impassable country. They, too, had gone without fires and fresh meat. In fact, the outlook was as bad as it could be. The men were not soldiers in the regular army sense of that word. They knew nothing of drill and less of discipline. They understood nothing at all of Clark's military plans, nor why the capture of Vincennes was vital to the preservation of American settlement in Kentucky. They would have faced Indians or white soldiers, even if the foe outnumbered them two to one, had there been plenty of food at hand. But they were not willing to face another long march in misery such as they had endured for days past. Only the magnetic force of Clark's personality, the faith that he would change everything, had held them in line to this point. Now, apparently it could hold them no longer. Grumbling and gloom had turned into something very like mutiny. The men looked at the endless width of flooded prairie ahead of them, and, shivering already in the bleak and rainy dawn, and gnawed with hunger, they refused to wade into it.

The two forces had joined at dusk the day before. Clark and Jeff had spent most of the night

discussing the situation. Even Jeff would have advised retreat if he had believed there was a chance of Clark's agreeing with him. But he knew his chief. Clark did not retreat. Therefore, Jeff Smoke, proud of Clark's trust in him, would not retreat either. He would go on to a useless and clammy death because Clark expected it of him.

Now, Jeff's men had got used to the presence of Becky Landers during the first few days and had ceased to think about her. She had given none of them trouble. Indeed, she had been as good a man as any of them. If the march had been pleasant they would have made a great deal of fun out of the fact that their drummer boy was a girl. There would have been endless jokes and roughly rhymed ballads about Becky Landers. But jokes and verses do not spring readily to the minds of starving and freezing men. They had forgotten Becky. All they thought of was their unhappy situation and how to get out of it. That was why nothing was said about her when the two little groups of disgruntled men met. Even her friend, Jeff, was not thinking of her as he sat, in extreme discomfort, with Clark in the lee of a willow bush under a drizzling sky and discussed the peril of a wholesale desertion. She was recalled to him presently with a jolt.

"I wish little Tom Pim hadn't come," Clark said. "Tom ought to have been born a girl, so that he would be taken care of. He isn't strong enough for a man's work in this country." That was when

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Jeff felt the jolt. He had now to tell Clark that it was not Tom Pim, but Becky Landers, who had come! Jeff felt reasonably certain that his chief would not be in the least delighted to learn that a very nice little girl had been added to his troubles! Somehow or other with many stutters, Jeff managed to impart the information. Clark, who had a sudden and violent temper, leaped up with a bellow of rage. That roar was the first sound to penetrate the numbed brain of Becky Landers, lying in a state bordering on coma on the other side of the willow.

"You—you——!" Clark could find no adequate descriptive for Jeff, so he roared on. "A girl—a helpless girl—good for nothing but to run away and go on a long march as if it were a picnic—and then lie down and die like a sick rabbit! A girl! If I'd made the world there would be no girls in it. You can bet on that! A weak whimpering girl—asking every man in turn to take her home to her Maw!"

"But, Cap'n——" Jeff tried to stem the torrent of injustice in vain.

"Shut up! That's what is the matter with the men. *That's* why they've lost their grit. They've seen that girl sobbing and sniffing for days——"

There was a good deal more, which Becky missed. A strange thing had happened to her. A few moments ago she had been lying limp and stupefied from hunger and cold, not caring whether she ever moved again. But as Clark's words, with their dire insult, reached her mind, she felt somewhat as if

hot water had been thrown over her. Her blood began to move and her limbs to tingle. She could feel her strength coming back to her in vast hot pounding waves of rage. Even Jeff's halting words to the effect that Becky Landers was "jes' as good as a man" did not soothe her. They made her angrier. She got up on her feet and started after the two men, who were now walking swiftly into the stubbornest group of mutineers—Clark being determined to bring matters to a head at once. She came up with them just in time to hear Clark say he had a good mind to shoot Jeff Smoke for bringing "that girl."

Because Becky Landers was naturally of a cool and practical temperament she chose her words carefully even when she was very angry. She always felt that the real way to "get back" at any one, who annoyed her seriously, was by showing the offender that he lacked intelligence. That was because nothing humiliated Becky, herself, so much as to be shown, or to find out for herself, that she had not really used her brains. She proceeded now in that vein with George Rogers Clark.

"It is very silly of you, Captain Clark, to threaten to shoot Jeff," she panted, rather huskily. "You won't shoot him, because you can't afford to. You need him. I don't think this is the time to be saying *stupid things!*"

"Well! Upon my word——" Clark gasped. He looked down on the very straight, very indignant,

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young person before him. Then his blue eyes kindled and he laughed.

"I don't want to hear Jeff, or any one else, ever say again in all my life that I'm as good as a man," Becky proceeded, her voice growing stronger with the impetus of her wrongs. "I'm a *girl*—g-i-r-l, girl—and I'm proud of it! If you had an army of *girls*, Captain Clark, they would be across that swamp and halfway to Vincennes by now." She looked around scornfully. "You men can sit here and whine if you want to. *I'm going to Vincennes to get my brother!*" Then, ignoring them all, as if they did not exist, she strode towards the icy marsh, beating a furious tattoo on Tom's drum to relieve her outraged feelings.

Clark, quick to see his opportunity, cried out: "There isn't a man in Kentucky who wouldn't be proud to run through water after a pretty girl! *And I'm first!* Come on, boys!"

Clark passed Becky on the run. Jeff, following, seized her in his arms, swung her up, and sat her on his shoulder. She perched there, throbbing with excitement and drumming like mad. Clark plunged into the marsh. The icy water reached almost to his waist. Guessing that a few, at least, were wavering even yet, he did one of those wild things for which his men loved him. He tore off his jerkin, baring his body to the bitterly cold air.

"It's too hot for me!" he shouted. "Who's afraid to follow?" Whooping and yelling the men rushed

in after him. In this fashion they crossed miles of flooded country. The hardships continued for the several days of travel towards Vincennes but, though many of the men could hardly drag themselves along, there was no more grumbling. At last the outlines of the British fort appeared above the surface of the land. Fortunately, at this point, Clark captured a boat of supplies and his famished men had a full meal at last. They waited for darkness; then rushed upon the fort with a fusillade.

The firing continued all night. The Americans had the advantage because they could see the garrison and sentries; while they, themselves, were screened by darkness and low brush. In the flare from the fort it was not difficult for Becky to recognize Captain De Quindre on the wall.

"I suppose I ought to want him to be killed," she muttered, her teeth chattering with excitement. "But, oh, I don't! I don't!"

Next morning Clark suspended fire so that he might send messengers to Governor Hamilton demanding his surrender. The order to cease firing was not instantly understood. A few more shots whizzed across the open space. A chill gripped Becky's heart, as if with icy talons, for she saw De Quindre fall.

The parley was short. Hamilton knew that his situation was hopeless. In another hour or so Clark was master of Vincennes, and its former defenders were his prisoners. The Governor and the

unwounded soldiers were taken out to be sent to Virginia under armed escort. Becky entered the fort in the afternoon. A glance at the few dead told her that De Quindre was not among them. She learned presently that he lay badly wounded in the near-by cabin of a French *habitant*. Without asking permission, she joined two of Clark's men who were searching the surrounding dwellings. They came to the *habitant's* cabin presently. Roget, the owner, told them in broken English that there was one man inside who would die pretty soon. A moment later Becky was looking down once more into the pallid face and burning eyes of Dagniaux De Quindre.

"It is Mademoiselle Mercy!" he whispered, and smiled at her briefly.

"I reckon the Frenchman's right. This one'll give no more trouble," said one of the men with her. They went out on their round of the cabins.

"Are you very badly wounded?" she asked gently.

"Oh, *oui*. This time maybe I die. Why not? A wolf does not live forever."

"I'm so sorry."

"You have tears in your eyes for me? That is very beautiful. But you came to Vincennes not to see me—alas!—but to find your brother. Ask Roget to take you to the cabin of Pierre Lenoir. He is there." His eyes closed. He added, presently, in a weaker voice, "I will not die until you return to say *adieu*. You will come?"

"Oh, yes. Indeed I will!"

Mad with impatience at the deliberate footfalls of old Roget, Becky finally arrived at Lenoir's cabin. She rushed in.

"Rod! Rod! It's Becky!" she shouted. Then she gasped and fell silent at the sight of a handsome young man, a head taller than herself, with ruddy brown hair and bright brown eyes very like her own. Rod had grown up!

"Becky!" he exclaimed in utter amazement and stared back at her. "Why—why—you aren't a little girl any longer!"

"No. And you are so big! Oh, Rod, mother will be so happy!" She flung her arms about him.

There was so much to talk about that it was dusk again before Becky remembered the dying wolf to whom she had promised to say adieu.

"I'll come back in a little while, Rod," she said, after telling him where she was going.

"Becky," he caught her hand. "We've talked so much about Mother and Ted and Ruthie that I haven't told you what Captain De Quindre did for us. The Indians were taking me to Detroit when his scouts finally found me. He had been searching everywhere. He bought me from them for a high price in guns and powder and brought me here. We owe everything to him."

She nodded. "He would," she said; "he gave me his word."

At the door of Roget's cabin she met one of Clark's men who said to her:

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"Better not go in, Miss. The old Frenchman says a man jes' died in thar." He moved on. Roget came out and walked slowly down the street.

Becky hesitated for a moment. Then, her heart heavy with reproach because she had neglected the dying man who had begged her to return, she went in. An old woman in a hood, who was tying a blanket about her as a shawl, was the only occupant of the room. Becky glanced timidly at the covered figure on the floor. Presently she crossed slowly to it and stooped, hesitantly putting out a hand to turn back the cover from the face of the dead man. A sob broke from her. The old woman, who had come to her side noiselessly, gently took her hand restraining her.

"I didn't come back in time," Becky said, mournfully, forgetting that the woman probably did not understand English. She felt her hand gently pressed and lifted and, then, as gently kissed. Then she heard a whisper:

"Pray for the soul of Dagniaux De Quindre, which now goes back to the wilderness from whence it came."

"You speak English? Tell me, when did he die?"

"The wolf died when he met you—dear Mademoiselle Mercy."

Becky started violently and smothered a cry. She turned sharply. The blanketed figure was already at the door. In the dimly lit room she could catch only a faint gleam of glittering greenish eyes before

the door opened and the "old woman" disappeared. Becky sank into a chair and pressed her hands over her thumping heart. Whoever lay dead under that blanket it was not her wolf! But wounded, even badly wounded, he had been; she was certain of that. Where, and how, would he travel through the bleak waste and the pelting chill rain, wounded and weak as he was? What hope could he have of surviving? Perhaps he was only choosing the fate he preferred; to die a free thing in the wilderness, rather than to be made captive by his foes. Still, he was French, like most of the settlers about Vincennes; so there was a chance he knew of a safe place to go. So fierce, so terrible a man; she ought not to like him so much—yet to her he had been grateful and honorable! Well, it was her secret, hers alone; she would not tell even Rod. She started back to Lenoir's cabin presently. Rain was falling heavily and there was a wind. As she looked out towards the density beyond the fort walls, there was a prayer in Becky Landers' heart for the safety of Dagniaux De Quindre out there somewhere, perhaps alone, in that drifting maze of storm and shadow.

CHAPTER XX

BECKY MEETS HER WOLF AGAIN

THE day prophesied by Boone's wife came a few years later.

Two large pirogues which had traveled in company many miles of the "Beautiful" River—which is the meaning of "Ohio"—nosed to shore at last at the diminutive hamlet of La Charette (now Booneville, Missouri). La Charette was the farthest western white settlement. It was the outer frontier. A handful of French and Spanish trappers and hunters lived there and two or three Americans.

In the leading pirogue were Daniel and his Rebecca and their younger children and their sparse household goods. The other boat was captained by a much younger man, named Rodney Landers. Life with the Indians had given Rod a taste for wandering. He was a born hunter, like Daniel, and so he had joined Daniel on the latter's last westward push into the country of Big Game. His mother, Becky, Ted and Ruthie accompanied him; also Reuben Page and Jeff Smoke. Jeff had become Rod's and Becky's man Friday since Clark could give him no more employment.

Rod carried his little mother ashore, while Jeff took Ruthie. Ted and Becky and Reuben clambered up the bank laden with bundles. Becky could hear Boone's hearty voice responding to a greeting. Evidently he had encountered, even here, at the end of the world, one of the chance acquaintances he had made on his many long hunts.

"Wal! I'm glad ter see yer! Ask me what I'm doin' hyar, eh? Tell the truth, Kaintucky's gittin' too crowded fer a big loose-j'inted feller like me. I want more elbow room."

Some one sprang lightly to Becky's side. She felt the huge bundle of blankets, which was almost bending her double, lifted from her shoulders.

"Permit me to be your pack horse, Mademoiselle," said a soft voice.

She started violently, drew herself up straight as an arrow, and looked the speaker in the face.

"My Wolf!" she cried out, without thinking what she was saying.

De Quindre's greenish eyes sparkled with amusement.

"But, *oui*. It is indeed your Wolf. But now so tame, Mademoiselle Mercy! So very tame! Wars are no more. The Wolf hunts men no longer. Only buffalo and deer—and that bright rosy-winged bird that is called Happiness."

"De Quindre," said Boone, "I never could see why a man so plum elegant as yer be don't go an' live with the swells in Quebec an' N'Orleans."

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"Oh, my friend!" De Quindre threw out his hands. "Though this Wolf is tame, he is not yet ready for the cage! I will breathe my last under the open sky, and not be smothered to death under a silk quilt!"

He turned to Mrs. Landers and gracefully put his cabin at the disposal of herself and her family. Though her face had shadowed with the memory of past terrors, which the sight of him brought back vividly, she thanked him and accepted.

"I am glad to have the opportunity to express my gratitude to you, sir, for finding and protecting my son," she said, her voice tremulous with emotion.

"Yeh. Never guessed yer meant our Becky when yer talked about Mademoiselle Mercy an' her brother," Boone said, laughing.

They all went towards De Quindre's cabin.

"I have some buffalo tongues which I will cook for your supper now," De Quindre said, as eager and pleased as a boy. "And tomorrow I will have the pleasure of helping Rodney and the men of your party raise your cabin."

"Sure is fine ter meet an old enemy," said Boone, jocularly.

"Ah, Colonel Boone. We have come together to the last frontier, where old foes become friends. Why? Because here they *need* each other! Need teaches us humanity and comradeship. As once, my terrible need taught me my first lesson of mercy in the wilderness."

"I was badly enough in need when you found me," Rod remarked.

"Of what do you think so solemnly, Mademoiselle?" De Quindre asked Becky, in his old mocking manner.

Becky flashed a smile at him and tossed her head.

"I'm thinking of the supper you've just offered us. You go and get those buffalo tongues and give them to *me*, Captain De Quindre. I never met the man who could cook as well as I can! I can promise you that there are two old foes I could mention who won't become friends on the last frontier, if you insist on cooking—and spoiling—the supper!"

"But I have nothing on which to broil the meat but my ramrod," he protested.

"What more do you need? I use mine when I'm out hunting. Give it to me," said Becky, practical as ever.

Soon the friendly chattering group of wanderers in the little cabin was sniffing the most delectable of all food odors—meat broiling over a pine fire.

Above them hung the infinite night, infinitely starred, while the hush of the Great Plains flowed, like a silent tide, to their door.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Historical characters appearing or mentioned in BECKY LANDERS, FRONTIER WARRIOR are the Boones, the Calloways, Kenton, Floyd, Clark, De Quindre, Black Fish, Governor Hamilton, and Major Hay.

Historical events are Clark's arrival with the powder and the way he forced it from the Virginia Government; his expeditions into the Illinois, with their terrible hardships and a threatened mutiny; the capture of Boone and his turning the salt-makers over to Black Fish in order to save Boonesborough; and the story he tells of his visit to Detroit, his adoption by Black Fish, his Indian name, his escape; the siege of Boonesborough; and Boone's last trek to Missouri.

The author has endeavored to make a composite picture of communal and family life in Kentucky with its forts, its cabins and furnishings, its sports and customs, as well as of the sterner life of its warriors and hunters; and to show the heroic part played by the women and the young girls of the frontier in the troublous years of the Revolution. To this end, and for the purposes of the narrative, she has taken license with minor facts. For instance, the capture of Boone's and Calloway's daughters occurred in another year. Clark could make a good

soldier out of a bad man, but the majority of his army were not outlaws; Kenton was out scouting when the Indians came down and they cut him off so that he could not reach Boonesborough till after the siege; the successful *ruse* of the women in fetching water was employed on another occasion; during Boone's captivity his wife gave him up for dead and returned to North Carolina.

Life in *Tennessee* during the same years, and immediately after, is depicted in the author's companion volumes, *Silent Scot*, *Frontier Scout*, and *The White Leader*.

CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER.

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Becky Landers, frontier warrior

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BECKY LANDERS

Frontier Warrior

By Constance Lindsay Skinner

INDIANS had killed Becky Landers' father, and captured her elder brother. So Becky became the man of the family. She had to hunt and trap to meet the needs of her delicate mother and her little brother and sister for food to eat and for skins for clothing. Because she could sew and weave like a clever girl as well as trap and shoot like a boy, Simon Kenton, the famous scout, said, "That gal is twins!"

In following Becky Landers' adventures you learn how Kentucky was won and held against the Indians led by the fascinating and terrible Dagniaux de Quindre. And you meet Daniel Boone and his daughter, Jemmy, who was Becky's chum, and Kenton and the dashing George Rogers Clark, and also the brave pioneer women who helped these famous frontiersmen to the utmost sacrifice to hold Boonesborough and thus to save the whole Illinois country for the American Union.